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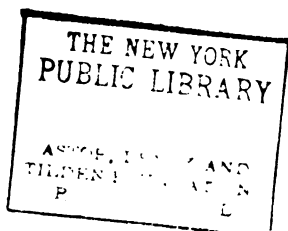




# MY LADY OF AROS









"He came back, laden with a branch." [See p. 238.

# MY LADY OF AROS

BY

JOHN BRANDANE

*McCord, 2011*

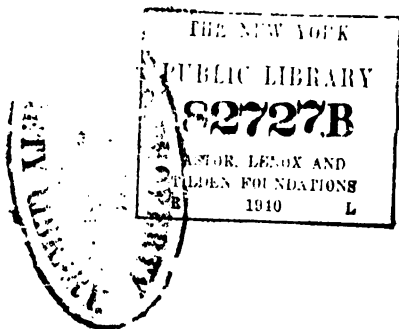


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*To my Friends in the Isle  
of Mull*

*I wrote this tale when I dwelt amongst you in the darling Isle. Will you accept the dedication of it, with my love? And will you pardon the liberties taken with the strict letter of geography and of history? I think the chief of these is that I have set the House of Aros somewhere about the beginning of the Gruline Road, just where it debouches from Salen. And, to speak the white truth—always a difficulty with the Romancer—I should not wonder, indeed, if in my fancy the Laird's Study stood where now Black Watch Cottage shelters so cosily.*

*J. B.*

*January, 1910*

*" An-t-Eilean Muileach, an-t-eilean aghmhor,  
An-t-eilean grianach mu'n iath an saile,  
Eilean buadhmhor nam fuar-bheann arda,  
Nan coilltean uaine, 's nan cluaintean fasail."*

DUGALD MACPHAIL.

**" O the Island of Mull is an isle of delight,  
With the wind on the shore and the sun on the height,  
With the breeze on the hills, and the blast on the Bens,  
And the old green woods and the old grassy glens."**

**Translation of *An-t-Eilean Muileach*  
by JOHN STUART BLACKIE.**



**X****CONTENTS**

<b>CHAP.</b>		<b>PAGE</b>
<b>XXVIII.</b>	<b>NORMAN PLAYS HIGH . . .</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>XXIX.</b>	<b>MACQUARIE'S CARDS . . .</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>XXX.</b>	<b>THE LETTER . . .</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>XXXI.</b>	<b>PERPLEXITY . . .</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>XXXII.</b>	<b>DEAF ALAN . . .</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>XXXIII.</b>	<b>THE CLACHAIG PASS . . .</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>XXXIV.</b>	<b>THE WOMAN ANSWERS . . .</b>	<b>289</b>
<b>XXXV.</b>	<b>DRUMFIN GOES FISHING . . .</b>	<b>296</b>
<b>XXXVI.</b>	<b>" BEANNACHD LEIBH ! " . . .</b>	<b>309</b>
	<b>GLOSSARY OF GAELIC WORDS . . .</b>	<b>315</b>
	<b>GLOSSARY OF SCOTS WORDS . . .</b>	<b>317</b>



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A T T O R N E Y A N D  
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P L



# My Lady of Aros

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## CHAPTER I

### THE "THESEUS" ANCHORS IN A MIST

It is many and many a year ago, yet you still may hear in Isle Tìree of the stormy October day when the guns of a great battleship of the Second George called for aid along its misty shores. It is not, however, by reason of this wildest of tempests, which nigh drove the *Theseus* to her doom, that the generations of islesmen keep fresh the memory of that morning; it is because there began then the old-time tale which is here set down.

For half the preceding night the storm had muttered and threatened all along the fringes of the Hebrides. Then, with the first raw grey of dawn, these feints at onset gave way to reality, and the eager gales poured across Atlantic leagues to whip the scant coast herbage thinner yet. The gaunt cliffs of Mull and Skye thrilled to the swing and shock of waves, mighty and untiring. But green Tìree is cliffless, and her sunken reefs and sandy bars—doubly treacherous as the mists came on—gave neither roar of breakers nor vision of leaping spray such as her sister-isles had afforded for warning to unlucky mariners. The surges never broke fully on her hidden shoals; and if they broke

lightly, they seemed on the instant to call *hush* ! as if to screen their error from the enfolding and conspiring mists.

It is still a riddle how the *Theseus* came there ; but come there she did, and in a bad hour. All the way from the Virginias she had safely voyaged, and here in the homeland seas she was like to have ended her days. Ransome, her captain, was beside himself, and no wonder he bit his finger-nails as the fog thickened despite the rising wind. It was the lead that told him first of all how far astray he was ; and at last he anchored. But his anchors dragged once or twice, and—to add to his miseries—a gun had broken loose, disabling several seamen before it was tripped and lashed securely. And now he paced his quarter-deck, listening for an answer to his last gun-fire. A soaking mist was around, so that in front he could barely see the ship's waist ; above him the mainyard was invisible, and the squalls that at intervals tore the curtains of vapour apart showed nothing but fresh banks of fog sweeping down on him from every side. Below him he heard the churning of the yeasty sea ; above, the wind whistling in the cordage as it slatted against bare poles. From the foc'sle there came at intervals the bos'n's whistle and faint calls in response ; and then the ship rocked to the recoil of the next gun-fire. Ransome paced the quarter impatiently back and forth, his foul-weather clothes dripping, his clean-cut features sodden and glistening, his shoulders, by reason of this burden of anxiety, drooping overmuch for a man of fifty years.

But a new piping from the bos'n's whistle straightened his back of a sudden ; there were shouts from the ship's waist, and from somewhere on the face of the angry waters voices were to be heard replying. For the moment Ransome looked for another craft too close to be safe, and involuntarily glanced aloft to see if the fog had thinned sufficiently to show her yards. Then a blast from the nor'west tore open a lane in the mist, and he saw what looked like a cutter drift past, her sails stowed, her men at the oars. But an alert seaman had flung a line, and now ran along the bulwarks, crossing quarter and poop, and coming down with a slide on the captain's walk behind the state-room. He called out that he held the cutter safely, and several of the crew coming aft, Ransome took up his post under the great stern-lanthorn, and saw to the lowering of a rope-ladder.

"Pilot, sir," cried the bos'n in Ransome's ear. "Says he can take us out into open water, fog or no fog."

"Let him come aboard, then," said the captain. "We'll give him his price, whatever it be. Haul in."

There were shouts and counter-shouts, and the delay had almost proved fatal, for what with the sagging of the frigate and the cutter on the rise and fall of the waves, it looked as if the line must be cut, if the little craft were not to be capsized or its timbers torn asunder. And yet—it seemed the most fool-hardy of things—the bos'n at the end of the ladder was bargaining with the pilot—an oddly dressed fellow in a habit that savoured more of the parson than of the mariner.

together by discipline of the sternest. And here was a wrench that for the instant left him with a feeling of helplessness, and a desire to lean on a commander or a subordinate: it mattered little which, as long as he might turn to him with a sense of common duty—a sense of common danger. It was but momentarily, however, that this mood lasted, and soon the young surgeon turned his thoughts to the work in hand, and set to questioning the oarsman nearest him as to the sick man on shore.

“Oh, he’ll be a MacDougall, and married on a second cousin of Deaf Alan,” said the man in bad English.

“Deaf Alan?” queried Fraser.

“Yes, yes. Just Deaf Alan—he’ll be piloting the big ship now,” said the old man, pointing into the mist.

“Oh, the fat fellow? He looked more like a clergyman than a sailor to my eye.”

“That’s just what he is, sir—a minister, and a good sailor forbye. Whether it’s at bridal or burial, at tiller or nets, with his book or his gun, it’s just he that’s the pretty man.” There was a hint of enthusiasm in the ancient’s voice.

“And what now is the matter with this second cousin’s sick husband, whom he sets such store by?” pursued Fraser.

“A knife, sir.”

“A knife?”

“Ay, just a knife between the shoulder-blades, sir.”

Fraser entered into this spirit of grim conciseness at once.

“ Who put it there ? ” he asked.

“ Ah ! ” said the greybeard, with a wary look at his interrogator, “ but it’s now that you are asking me the question.” He shipped his oar. “ Here is the landing, sir,” said he.



"I am honoured in this meeting, sir," said the man, bowing. "Good-bye."

Fraser returned his salute in silence, and Mrs. MacNeill showed her companion down the passage. It was at this juncture that the surgeon for the first time noted that his old sailor friend had disappeared, and he turned to the doorway to look for him. As he did so a hurried whispering from the lobby came to his ear, and a name was several times repeated that took his fancy strangely: "Drumfin—Drumfin" was the word. Then a door closed, and the landlady bustled cheerfully ben to turn the peats and bewail the weather.

"Such sleet as this fog has now turned to! You came indoors in time, sir," she cried. "But it's soaking you are all the same. You must change, sir."

Fraser threw aside his sea-cloak and protested himself as comfortable as he could desire.

"It's your death you're courting, sir, if you'll no do as I bid you. . . . Yet surely now you'll take my commands in the matter of cordials, then; and it's the good French aquavity I'll be bringing you. . . . Mr. Fraser? Is that the name, sir? . . . Maybe you'll have the Gaelic, sir?"

"The Gaelic?" said Fraser, smiling. "No; but my father had it before me, if there's any virtue in that."

"Do you tell me?" cried the good dame, and her face flushed with pleasure, as she busied herself with stoup and glasses.

And now Fraser saw that her Highland pride was aroused. He saw, too, not without anxiety, that

her next enquiries would involve a trying climb on his part into the heights of his genealogical tree, and in sheer defence he led off the subject at once.

"Is the old gentleman a laird in the Isle?" he asked, choosing the first suggestion of memory.

On the instant the woman dropped a glass, and thereby hid a sudden change of countenance, as she stooped to pick it up. It was a keen glance she flashed at the surgeon before she answered.

"Not what you'd call a laird, sir; maybe a laird's doer, or factor, might be nearer it, maybe. He's a fine man, but it's just his name is the thing I'm aye forgetting. . . . But, eh, sir, isn't it a woeful business this killing of the Chisholm man. And in my house of a' houses, sir! What's to come of it? what's to come of it?"

It was clear that she had but followed Fraser's example in leading off from the subject proposed. It suited his mood, however, and he coaxed and coaxed her into the details of the tragedy, until finally she rehearsed the tale connectedly. How much of her volubility depended on her interest in the story—how much on her desire to take her hearer off the track of her late visitor, were questions that came often uppermost in Fraser's mind in after years. At present the narrative itself absorbed his attention.

"This is the way of it, sir," said she, "and little enough does my decent change-house deserve to be mixed up in it. The like never happened to me when my dear man had life and was with me. . . . But this is the way of it. . . .

"There's one Angus MacLean lives here—only

Deaf Alan, sir ; until you ken him, there's no description of him will serve. And when all's said and done, Mr. Fraser, he's better unkenned."

"And that's the true word, Flora," said a boyish voice from the doorway of the chamber.

Looking round, Fraser beheld a slight figure, clad in a dripping cloak, surmounted by a pale face with aquiline features, a wisp of straw-coloured hair falling over the low brow.

## CHAPTER III

### A MAKER OF MAPS

"MR. CATTANACH!" cried the landlady. "And in such a storm! You'll have done little map-making the day, I'm thinking."

The youth laughed lightly, and coming forward, tossed off his sodden wrap-rascal, and bowed to Fraser.

"This is the surgeon from the big ship," said Mrs. MacNeill, "Mr. Fraser by name, sir."

"Sir," said the young man, saluting again, "a glass of wine with you, if you'll honour me. My name is Cattanach. I have heard of your merciful errand, and of how you have lost touch with your ship. Lord! how I wish my task in life had been somewhat after your pattern."

Fraser bowed in reply, and accepted the invitation to wine.

"In chirurgery now," went on the youth, seating himself glass in hand, to steam his legs at the peat-fire, "—in chirurgery there might be something of newness day by day—a limb to mend, a life to save. But in cartography—at least in cartography of these parts, look you, all one can do is to say amen to the markings of old Timothy Pont's wonderful maps."

"I've heard them praised before now," said Fraser.

"Sir," said the youth, "they're the very devil."

"Heard you never a whisper in Virginia now," said Cattanach, "that with all this pother in Canada and in India—with our Americas restless and France hostile, a new Stuart rising would be an easy matter?" The map-maker spoke in a low tone, his glance on the chamber's door to see that they were private.

"Heavens, man, no? Never a renewal of that old madness, surely?" said Fraser.

"But yes, none other, sir."

"Ah, no. There was a time, let us allow, when that cause may have been worth red blood in streams. But nowadays—well, the thing's a bubble—a breaking bubble that deceives no one, Mr. Cattanach."

"Of that I am not so sure, sir. But deceive or not, do not you see, Mr. Fraser—let the bubble break, or let the bubble soar, at least it would distract England by either performance, and so serve England's enemies—France especially."

The surgeon smiled a negative with the wise air of a man a few years older than his companion.

"Mr. Fraser," said Cattanach earnestly, in reply to this smile, "how long have you been away from home waters?"

"Two years."

"Three months are enough for a scheme of the kind I speak of, sir."

Something in the youth's air startled Fraser, and he eyed him questioningly. The other returned his glance and nodded as if in answer.

"What would you give, Mr. Fraser, to avert such

a disaster as a renewal of this old Stuart folly ? ” said Cattanach, suddenly rising, as if with a determined air ; and crossing to the fireplace, he faced suddenly on the surgeon, his eyelids narrowed, his wisps of blond hair falling over them. “ What would you say, if I told you that the work of planning another Stuart rising is on foot now, and in this very isle, sir ? ”

“ What madness—what utter madness ! ” said Fraser slowly.

“ If I read you aright, sir,” went on the other, with something of missionary zeal, “ you are a man with ideals—one who would serve his country’s good, be the cost little, be the cost much. I, too, have my visions, sir. Here is our opportunity, and here let us seize it. I am but a travelling student, you a surgeon, and neither of us seems trained for the work of a spy. And here we are, set as by Providence in the midst of a coil of conspiracy. For the agent of the Prince himself is here in hiding, fast weaving the nets for his master to draw—taking these poor islesmen’s silver for a cause already lost.”

“ Who is this ? ” asked Fraser.

“ MacLean of Drumfin—straight from St. Germain’s but a week ago, if you please.”

“ Drumfin ? ” said the surgeon, recalling the name he had heard whispered so persistently in the passage that afternoon, “ Drumfin ?—a tall old man, white-haired, with a long oval of a face, sun-tanned ? ”

“ The man to a button,” said Cattanach excitedly. “ And fine brown eyes, a trifle sad—eyes that would

of my dissembling, Mr. Fraser. To tell truth, he is flying Tìree because our friend Deaf Alan returned there yesterday. For since his return Alan has been making kind enquiry as to the health of Angus and myself. . . . The good, kind Alan—eh ? . . . Therefore it is that Angus and I make our little voyage together.” He laughed lightly as he saw the perplexity deepen on Fraser’s dark face. “And,” he went on, “—and you are with us, my friend, because, in an open boat, and in stormy waters such as these—well—three are better company than two, Mr. Fraser. . . . Not so, eh ? ”

Throughout that night of storm the little cutter battled for her life, and there was good reason before daybreak to appreciate the value of a third hand in her crew. By turns each took the tiller, and by turns they rested as much as they dared. At dawn the Tìree man and Fraser were almost spent, but Cattanach seemed tireless. His badinage never ceased ; his delicate airs were never abated through it all ; and after hauling on a stay, he would rearrange his cloak and hat as daintily as if he were in a London street, and wait the next onset of the gale with equanimity. Fraser, indeed, could not help but admire the man’s coolness, though all his banter and fine airs seemed so much blasphemy in the face of that awful sea and sky.

With sunrise the storm abated ; by ten in the morning they were able to put about and run towards the mainland again, and noon found them weltering through the first sleet of winter at the mouth of Aros Sound.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SPY

THE wind was still nor'west and full in the track of Kyle Aros. There were variations from the on-pouring of the gale, however ; gusts came from the cliffs walling the Sound on the west ; and then a hiss of mingled spray and rain urged Fraser, now at the tiller, to a wariness that was absent as long as the timbers' strain and joggle told him of a wind already reckoned with. Yet, even when danger menaced, his work was done with a lassitude plainly not of the flesh alone. Storms of the black tropics at Panama, the bitterness of a winter on the Labrador—these had made no harmony with his spirit at any time ; but here in the seas of home, the grey sky and the stormy waters were attuned to his mood as never before.

Cattanach in a cloak and tricorne crouched at the steersman's feet on the weather side, and smiled up as engagingly as ever at the set face above him.

"Mr. Fraser," said he, "I've been regretting——"

Fraser looked down. "Yes?" he answered, breaking silence for the first time in many hours.

"I've been regretting the three hundred crowns you've lost through Drumfin's evasion of us."

"I would not have touched a penny," said the surgeon quietly, his eye on the sail.

"Ah! the disinterested lover of his country?" said Cattanach, and putting a chilled hand on his heart, he assumed a smile that was half a sneer.



of a bay opening up on the west, where, distant and grey, a mansion sat cosily under a huddle of pines.

"You know these parts, sir?" queried Fraser.

"Know them, know them?" repeated the other absently, his glance ranging every howe and corrie. "Yes, yes, I know them. And by the same token," he went on, rousing suddenly from his reverie, "if you don't jibe her at once, you'll have us on the skerry."

Squalls were too frequent to allow of jibing; so the steersman put about instantly, and, as he did so, sent a cry of warning to MacLean, asleep under a spare sail in the cutter's bow, who, wakening, protruded his head, and showed the bird-like nose and eyes of his face hidden for the most part in a clout tying up the jaws.

"*Mo thruaigh!*" he cried. "What now, lad, what now? My poor head!" and in Gaelic he cursed a toothache heartily, and rolled to windward as the boat fell off on a new tack. But while he wound himself anew in his wraps, he happened to glance over the gunwale at the misty hills and the pine-encircled house set beneath them on the shore of the bay they were nearing.

"*Och, ochan!* and there is Aros itself," he said, turning round with a look of meaning at Cattanach, who made as if to avoid it by resuming his conversation with Fraser.

"Know these parts?" went on the spy. "Ay, and well, too; and so also, as you can see, does Angus MacLean there—indeed, the laird of Aros lands is no less than second cousin to him, and

speaking by the map, as one might say, his nearest relative. As to the why and wherefore of my own acquaintance with the landscape, my surgeon, never mind. But had it not existed you'd have sent us on the reef. And then—? Why then, we'd all have gone to join poor Chisholm in the shades."

At the last words he lowered his voice and fixed his eyes on the figure in the bows, now stolen under his canvas once more.

"Poor Chisholm, indeed!" said Fraser.

"Now, there's patriotism," chuckled Cattanach. "There's love for one's country; there's your spy who is in earnest—the man who dies at his task."

"Chisholm? The dead man?" cried Fraser in a loud whisper. Hitherto he had treated his companion cavalierly, but now his interest was awake, and in the surprise the words had aroused, he let the boat yaw, and some water was shipped. "Chisholm, a Government trusty? Was he, too, with you?" he exclaimed.

"*La! la! mon médecin!*" protested the other, "a little less of Aros Sound down my stock, if it please you." He pushed a fringe of wet hair from off his forehead, and, smiling, resumed in low tones: "Chisholm, hey? You never smoked him? Fie, fie, my dear Fraser!" He wagged a reproving finger.

"But—but—?" said the surgeon. "But it was personal only—the quarrel he died in, was it not?" A sudden suspicion had possessed him, and he bent forward threateningly to Cattanach, his features

to touch the heroic among the primitives of the isles ; but now came disillusion complete, and already he wished himself back on the cobbles of Cheapside, where his father had both home and business-house. . . . Home . . . the old folks and the little sister ! . . . the little sister a-dance on the stairs between the ancient parlour and the quarters where the clerks sat quill-scratching among bales of taffeta and paduasoy. . .

Cattanach's voice broke rudely in on his thoughts.

"A-dream, *monsieur* ? You'll have us on the rocks once more. Let me have the helm, sir."

They had, indeed, again run close to Aros shore ; and Fraser saw that with this wind and tide they could not make the mainland of Lorne ere evening fell. Should they anchor for the night or hold on ? Even as he hesitated Cattanach's hand, reaching for the tiller, came in contact with his, and he shuddered and drew off as though a leper had touched him.

The movement said more than many words, for wrath suppressed turned the spy's cheek, pale though it was, to the death-white. Then the surgeon spoke, staring the while at the light of hate newly sprung to life in the basilisk eyes, and his utterance seconded his action.

"Ugh !" he said. "Keep off !"

The words were scarcely said, the movement hardly made, when Cattanach in a passion of rage threw himself towards the helm. But Fraser, with outstretched arm met the attack so suddenly as to fling him off to leeward, so that he fell back into the well of the cutter, where for a space he lay helpless,

looking dazedly at the unmoved steersman swinging with the swell high above him. For a space only, though, for a quick launching of his foot towards the tiller, did what his hand had failed of doing, and wrenched the bar from the other's grasp. It jammed among smashed timbers in the cutter's side. The boat jibed at once. On the very instant a squall from Glenaros burst on them, and a faulty grommet gave way ; then, the boom swinging free, cracked in two over the lee-runners, while the sea hissed white with repeated gusts. MacLean, suddenly awake, scrambled to the throat-halyards ; Cattanach took the peak-lines ; the surgeon tore the tiller free and threw his craft up in the wind. But before the others could loosen and lower, another gowff of icy air fell on them. The boat heeled in broken fashion : some of the lines ran suddenly, so that the gaff's throat jammed ; and the boom swaying errantly, struck all save the helmsman to leaping waters.

Fraser stooped to throw an oar to them, and then, as he recovered himself, beheld the flood lipping the gunwale, and very sure and insistent, pour slowly in upon him.

He sprang clear of the sail, and was gripped by ice-cold water that now held nothing of the craft that might sustain him. Yonder, something like a seal's head bobbed obscurely as the sleet-shower parted for a moment ; one of his fellow-voyagers he surmised. Then the salt spray passed his lips ; and his breast came nigh to bursting—he was sinking, sinking, unplumbed tides thundering in his ears. But he rose again, and struck out for the vague

sit in the ingle-neuk, one elbow on the knee-flap of his muddy riding-boot, beheld in the fire's red heart naught but a woman's face, so like to that of the girl in the window-seat yonder. "Her mother's eyes ; her mother's smile," his sad heart said unceasingly.

Close by the lady stood a youth in kilt and plaid, who looked out into the winter gloaming, and saw nothing there but a great radiance and in the midst a happy bridal ; for him, in truth, the wind's shrill pibroch was only a wedding-rant. Out from the mist and the gathering dusk, O miracle ! beamed the face of the girl by his side.

And she—? Neither joy nor sadness possessed her quite, rather a rush of angry thoughts : her brother and his Prince in hiding in strange lands, even such hiding as this poor exile by the fire—her father's muddled estate-books—the last soumings of the tacksmen—the improved prices of black cattle—the continued emigrations of her countrymen to the Americas : a medley of poetry and prose all this, but never a thought for the suitor by her side. So forgetful, indeed, of his presence had she become, that when he spoke she started visibly.

"And what keeps Aros, cousin Morag ?" he asked in tones so low as to leave himself unheard by the man in the distant ingle.

"His journey was to Corrie to-day, but he should be back ere this," she answered. "He went to reason with the bouman there, who speaks of a flitting to Georgia, no less." She folded her arms tightly as she spoke, tugging back her tartan

screen from her shoulders in a movement of irritation.

"No less, you may well say," said the young man in surprise. "It will not be hereabouts, surely, that the rents are rising?"

"And how should they rise, cousin, when we have not a tacksman but is Highland, and among them never a Campbell?" said the girl bitterly. She flashed out a smile the next instant, however, and after knocking absently on the pane with her fingers for a little, turned an arch look on him and said: "It's a Lochaber lass who is going away with her people, and the Corrie bouman must be following her, *amadan* that he is."

"Lochaber, of course," said the chieftain. "And it's all one story there since the Red Fox was killed, though it's years ago: indeed, what can the poor folk do but leave? And as for following his heart, Morag MacLean, it is not me that will be blaming him, let me tell you." He glowed virtuously as he spoke, and the girl tossed her fair side-curles and smiled again.

But presently she fell moody, and picked up a month-old copy of a *Scots Magazine*.

"Read that," she said, pointing to a page. "There's a text for a sermon, cousin Kenneth."

He took the journal, and scanned the passage underbreath, the girl's foot tapping emphasis to his slow and lifeless rendering of the passage.

"*Fort-William, Sept. 4th,*" it ran. "*Yesterday sailed the 'Jupiter' from Dunstaffnage Bay, with about 200 emigrants on board for North Carolina, from Appin in North Argyleshire. Though formerly*

among the first to take up arms against the Reigning House, they now declare their readiness to support government, in case they find it necessary, on their arrival in America. They allege, in justification of their emigrating in these troublesome times, that it is better to confront an enemy in the wildest desert in that country, than to live to be beggars in their native land; that the oppressions of their landlords are such, that none but the timid will bear with them, while an asylum can be had in these wild, but happy regions of America, for those who have a spirit to seek for it. Many of them are among the best in circumstances in this neighbourhood, the uncharitable away with his seven sons. In short, will soon banish exactions of the proprietors of lands, this poor, but the old inhabitants, and depopulated Ulysses says of once happy country, which, as Ithaca, is

"A barren clime, but breeds a generous race."

"Yes," said Morag, her colour high, her eyes on the storm-swept Kyle: "a generous race. But . . . a barren clime? Ah! Eilean Aros, is it so they would miscall you: bens and glens and green silent places that my heart knows best? Never a blue shining sea-loch, never a dark lake of it all, Penelfish will leap to a swirl of Lussa or Forsa, but they give it the lie. Your birds thicp-dak in the waving birches, your deer throng on tanswining, mo chridhe. it is not you they will be meahere, s; is it that they And your happy folk, Eilean Aros, She ilean Dhia?" can leave you, eilean aghmhor, et back eave to-morrow,"

"Now here is one would l

said the young man warmly, "if the girl were a lass he kens, no Lochaber about her, but just plain Aros Isle."

"La, what happiness for the lass, sir, if she but cared for the man," said Morag, and again there came a rogue's smile to her lips.

"And there is just the trouble, cousin—"

"Listen," she interrupted—"Listen, and I'll tell you what I'd wish, if I were the maid from Benderloch." Her eyes sparkled; her colour came and went a little; but she had surely missed the serious airs of the chieftain, or ever she lightlied him as she did. "I had rather an old man with white hairs—a man who had seen Gledsmuir and Culloden, and a weary sight of days in caves and heather; I had rather it was Drumfin there that sighed his heart out on the quay at our sailing than the handsomest youth in all Keith's Highlanders. And for why, Mr. Hanover—for why? Ah! but that's what I'll never tell to mortal, as long as white roses are as little worn as at present they seem to be, sir."

"Your returned exile then would have the advantage of his grey hairs, cousin," said Pennyfuaran; "I was but aged ten in the 'Forty-five, and could have ill told a dirk from a cruise. But I'm thinking for some of us younger folk, Warburg Fight and Fellinghausen were just as namely as the fields you mention."

"Oh, Frederick, my Hanover!" hummed Morag, improvising for the moment.

"Fellinghausen," said the chieftain, unheeding the taunt. "'Twas there I was at my blackest



the lines of Aros' face lovingly, "make me forget even the language of the heart."

"The Gaelic, Gillian? Never?"

"Ay, the Gaelic, Alasdair. For Paris, Florence, Avignon, and where not else—a Babel of unchancy tongues, man—play the devil with the Gaelic as with much more. But, ah, my dear, it is worth all their palaces a thousand times to be at peace in Aros, even with a memory that fails."

"And, father," broke in Morag, "he is come straight from the cave on Beinn-nan-Uaimh, where he has lain for days, it seems. And he sat dripping wet for hours—where do you think?—in the kitchen, no less."

"It's an old trick, Alasdair," said Drumfin, smiling, "and it serves hereabouts as well as in the Hollands, I find. You are always safe for a warning at the back-door, you see; at the front entry, you are never sure. And in the kitchen you'll hear what the old campaigner has aye a fondness for—the news of the countryside."

"And 'tis only the littlest bite and sup he took, sir," went on Morag. "And he would not hear of his room being fired, until he had seen yourself, fearing danger to you. It's the red chamber I'll get ready, father?"

"Ay, the red room, Morag. Tuts! Gillian, you'll stay, you'll stay—Fawkener's men have left Duart for the mainland again, and we'll take our chance, man."

Morag gave a smile and a nod to Drumfin that said, "I told you so," as she went off to her housekeeping duties. But at the door she halted

with never a smile, and her backward glance at her cousin was solemn and pitiful.

When she had gone, her father turned eagerly to the exile. "And—?" he said, and paused: for not till then had he noticed Pennyfuaran's presence. At the entrance of Aros, but a moment before, the young chieftain had turned, and despite his bitterness of soul, could not but devour with admiring regard the picture the two old comrades made as they stood clasped there, smiling, fraternal. But now he caught the glance old MacLean gave him as he halted in his speech, saw its import in a flash, and his face flamed scarlet. Here was added gall to a cup already full.

"You might have spared me that, Aros," he said, not without a touch of dignity, as he made for the door. "My people were as fairly Charlie's men as yours, and did as little, more's the pity! But we may not be so far back, next rising," he added, darkly.

Drumfin stayed him with a hand on his shoulder. "Stir not for me, sir," he said, "for I've nothing to hide from you. Aros was a bit flustered at the sight of your kilt, and he meant his look for discretion only. You ken whose name was on his tongue?"

"Sit you down, Kenneth," said Aros. "I ettled no harm. 'Twas but the glint of your uniform that put me out for the moment."

"As for another rising—" said the exile. He shook a dubious head. "Expresses I have in plenty—from the Gasks, from Dr. King, from Elcho, from d'Aiguillon—and all anent that same.

## CHAPTER VII

### UNDER AROS ROOF-TREE

THE wind flowed gustily all night long across the three miles of the island's waist that divided the Sound from waters Atlantic. Aros lay at the east of this rift in the hills, and the spruce and larch sheltering the great house soughed stormily to the ear of the servitor in an upper room, keeping vigil by a castaway from the wrecked cutter.

Always was there heard the swish of the branches, the singing and drumming of the river swirling seawards in the blackness outbye. But at times a sudden access of fury took the gale. Far away the hint of some new trouble brewing would be audible above the more constant sounds of storm, and, swiftly gaining strength, this rumour became a tumult of a sudden. Momentarily and furiously the blast possessed the house, until it trembled; then, as it swept over whipped waters to Morvern, what seemed, by contrast, the very soul of quiet succeeded, and after a space, the ear was again aware of nought but the sough of the firs and the noise of the river girning at the bridge. But even in the tempest an islesman will find lullaby, and soon the watcher dozed at his post.

In dreams, Ian Fraser swam upwards through racing tides to a star burning solitary in the night above a woman's face; a star, golden, celestial in its calm shining; a woman's face—so sweetly

kind, so beautiful, the grey eyes lit with some marvel of a great desire. Yet he awoke only to the guttering of a smoky candle set before the grotesque features of a goblin.

He rubbed heavy eyelids with his left hand, for a stound of pain warned him of some injury to his right, and rubbing once more, observed that the goblin nodded and snored in sleep. Despite his general sense of *malaise*, he smiled at the odd face with the peaked eyebrows and tufted beard set above the tiny body. He smiled, and yet he sighed, for the reality gave too great a contrast to the vision. Again he recalled his lady of dream—that lovely face transparent in its purity, its longing for some grand miracle of the goodly life; and he fashioned in fancy once more the very accidents of her dress, the velvet snood, the fair side-curls, the tartan screen. If this were dream, was never dream so real, and still so fair.

And so, incredulous, he gazed at the slumbering servant, and sighed again. Then he stole gently from bed, and as he reached the floor, discovered with a groan that his injuries included a sprained ankle.

“Hand and foot,” he said, “yet alive. But where—?”

He found his garments dry and warm beside a fire of peats, and dressing in part, he limped silently around the shadowed room, nursing his arm the while. There were some chairs, a table, a chest, and a second tester-bed, which was tenantless. The door unbarred easily, as did also the two windows. From each casement, open in turn,

"Elcho?" said yet another voice, and there came a musical chuckle. "I'll warrant his standing is only this:—'*Redde argentum!*' It will be nothing with him, but, 'Try again, or turn again, my Prince: go or stay. But pay me back my loan of fifteen hundred.'"

"Yes," said the first speaker—and something of passion was now in his voice. "That's Elcho—poor Elcho! And more than he have the same tune, I fear. Then there are Forbes and the Oliphants asking the Prince for an outspoken word on the Church. Lord!—how can the man have ought clear on divinity, when in the humanity he sees about him there is so little to put faith in . . . . Too many Elchos, I tell you . . . . Would to God he had but a dozen true hearts patterned on Lochiel that's dead and awa'—I tell you they'd save him yet—some few that would bring him back the best of his own lost youth—that or nothing."

The sounds of the tempest drowned all for a little, and then in a lull came the low even tones again:

"And, as you ken, the lave in Scotland just lost what little heart they had, when Archie Cameron went to his death."

What more the listener heard was ravelled, less from any indistinctness of the words than from the increasing faintness caused by the pain of his injured arm. But his senses were still so far his own as to show him that here was a household of Jacobite conspiracy, as flagrant as that of the islemen in Tiree; and here was he, a Government servant, still striking blindfold into the midst of

these coils of treachery to his masters. What to do? What to do?

In another overwhelming of the place in the noises of the outer night, he stumbled with a great effort to his knees. But his arm doubled, and he fell with half his weight upon the door, so that it gave lightly. His eyes were dazzled of a sudden, by the light that filled the room he had so uncere- moniously entered; there was a clatter of glasses, a smell of wine that spilled and sprayed in his face momentarily as it fell; whilst an old gentleman with a bald pate, half-entangled in a tablecloth, slid to the floor, and throttled him in fumbling fashion.

"Death without priest to you!" spluttered his assailant in Gaelic. "Listening? Scum of the pit! Take your knife to him, Pennyfuaran, and give him a better end than he deserves."

Above the bald pate Fraser saw another face, white with passion—that of a young man in Highland army costume. He saw his hand, too, and it held the black knife ready. But he was also aware of a thin sword-blade sweeping over all three, and in one fiery, gliding movement, threatening each equally. For if its point menaced his heart, its edge came close to the hairless scalp of the elderly warrior, and was not far from the knife-arm of the younger. He beheld the wielder of the weapon in a stately old gentleman, whose bronzed oval of a face framed in silver hair, smiled down on him reassuringly. There was something strangely familiar to Fraser in the new-comer's aspect.

"Keep clear, Drumfin," cried the youth in the kilt and plaid. "I have him—spy that he is!"

"And if you but scratch him, Pennyfuaran, I have you. What would this we have become! Even the meekest Aros who thinks himself safe now at Lammie has turned to war again. Come now, Aros! Come now, Pennyfuaran."

They passed underneath his sword-arm, and leaving the other erect with his sword-arm still in Fraser's breast.

"What a great risk you have run the sea?" asked the

"You risk the —" he said in reply. One word

The surgeon was a little more than the young High-

"Drumlin." — "You saved his life by

—the man who but now had

his ready sword. Here again what

—the Jacobite gentleman with all the

—the Jacobite gentleman with all the

—the Jacobite gentleman with all the

—the Jacobite gentleman with all the

In a word or two the surgeon of the

ment and sense of danger caused by

house; his cautious reticences were

his weakness that hardly let here with

"I see—I see—" said flagrant a

"Let me ask him a little

interposed the sceptical

ved the black knife to

any could speak or move, all the barbarian in the youth flashed out, and he flung himself under the swordsman's steel, making for the throat of the fainting man.

The hanger gave a little twist, and nicked across the knuckles of the chieftain's right hand, so that the knife fell even before the blood showed.

"You are hasty," said Drumfin. "The man is really fainting, I believe, and it's me that this concerns more than any of you. Aside, man, aside, —spy or no spy, he's my concern, I say."

Bestriding Fraser in a single movement, he thrust his thigh forward suddenly and taking the shoulder of Pennyfuaran as if by accident, sent him sideways.

The sick man saw and heard no more just then, for the long-drawn agony of his doubled arm suddenly swept him into unconsciousness.

When he came to himself, he found that he was in his bedchamber again. The candle still flickered smokily, but through the lozens of the window he saw the dawnlight trembling in a sky of quiet grey clouds, and he noted that the crying of the winds was gone. The old gentleman with the shining pate bent over him, a bowl of posset in his hand, and at the first quiver of Fraser's eyelids he showed discoloured teeth in a musical chuckle. With alacrity the young man made as if to sit up in bed, but sank back with a cry of pain as his weight fell once more on the hurt arm; and solicitous and fearing the worst, the laird set the dish aside, and shuffled ineffectively on the floor, stuttering



the while. The sea-waif quickly recovered, however, and raising himself with his left hand, stretched it in turn for the vessel and took a long draught.

"More wine than milk, I fear," said the laird.  
"I mixed it hurriedly."

Fraser thanked him with a smile, set the bowl down, and forthwith stripping his right forearm, patted the swollen muscles, turning the wrist gingerly and grimacing all the time. So preoccupied with his examination indeed did he become, that he forgot the old man, gravely observant, with airs as respectful as if some rite of the Church were being performed, and when he looked up, he flushed with annoyance at having allowed himself anything but a demonstration in private.

"Is it broken it is?" asked the laird.

"Faith! how should I know?" said Fraser, fencing the question.

"It's a leech's skill you have in the moving of it anyway," said the other.

"Then God help the leech's patients, if his skill be not more than mine. But 'tis a sling it wants, I should say."

"Will a scarf serve?" said Aros, giving him a silken square from the table. "There's a surgeon-man in the isle—a MacNab. But there's many a hill to hunt for him, aye travelling as he is."

"The isle," cried Fraser, for it came on him with a horror that he might in some strange fashion have been carried back to Tìree. "What isle, sir?"

"Eilean Aros," said the laird.

"Ah!" sighed the youth in a sudden relief, as he knotted the silk in a triangle and adeptly slipped

head and arm to place in it—"Ah! And you took me from the sea, sir?"

"From the tangle and the black rocks of it, rather—a much easier task."

"You got the others?"

"None."

"They were swept off before we foundered," explained Fraser. "We were three in all."

"Peace to their souls," said Aros softly. And then as softly, but with shifting eyes and shuffling feet he asked: "A long voyage?"

Fraser caught a glint of the other's suspicious glance, and parried.

"Far and far enough," he said. "From Uist all the way, and a sorry day it was we ever left Lochboisdale." The half-truth stuck in his throat, and he reddened. Then, in order to avoid further questioning, he said, stammering the while, "But you must tell me to whose kindness I owe my life. My own name is Fraser, and I went south on business of the King's Navy."

"A good Scotch name," said the laird, his eye still sidelong. "You'll ken the Lovat country, I'll warrant?"

"I know what you mean," said the young man. "But no; I am London-born: and till a little ago I never saw the Highlands save from shipboard."

Aros' brow cleared quickly. "But you were asking my name," he said. "And it's just Alasdair MacLean of Aros: a poor man and a poor country."

He turned to trim candle and fire, and so missed

the dropping of the jaw and the general air of discomfiture which Fraser now presented.

"So, that's it," murmured the youth, settling down in bed so as to bring his face into shadow. "It only needed this to give the final turn to the comedy."

It was not enough, he bitterly told himself, that he should owe his life to the sword of the man whom he had hounded through Tiree only a fortnight before, but now, when he would fain show his gratitude, his very proximity threatened the safe hiding of the Jacobite. For, outside Tiree, he remembered, the nearest friend of the unhappy man he had aided in his flight thence, was the laird of Aros, and it was here that Chisholm's avengers—the Sunivaig MacLeans, would ferret first. In their view, he doubted not, he was art and part in the manslaughter, and he did not overlook his own danger. But what concerned him was the eye of publicity that his night's lodging would turn on Drumfin's place of hiding, and at any moment some of the garrison of soldiery in the island might hear of the exile's stay in Aros. His teeth clenched at the thought that his mere presence should so imperil the safety of this man he had so misunderstood. And straightway he determined that, lamed though he was in hand and foot, he would be packing ere night came.

"A bonnie pickle, as my father would say," he muttered underbreath—"A bonnie pickle. And Aros Point and the black rocks of it, and me wet in the sea-tangle, would be a prettier story, I'm thinking."

Soon the laird, hearing deep suspirations that warned him further talk would keep his guest from needed sleep, stole from the room. But the eyes turned to the wall were for long unclosed. Later, the sea-waif slept, and again he dreamt of the star and the woman's face, alike in their unearthly beauty, and dreaming still, awoke to a sound of a clear high singing.

The winter sunshine filled the room, and across the notes of the song, came the trill of a robin in the pine branch that swept the opened casement. Fraser robed as quickly as his hurts would allow, and stole to the window. Past the corner of the building ran a gravelled path, edged with box and ending in a clump of yews—the entrance to some kind of garden, he surmised ; and behind the trees he caught glimpses of something light like a woman's dress. Thence came the singing, sweetly wild, and with plaintive minor notes—a farewell—a lament—a strain to bring the ardent tear, if one but knew the tongue of this strange land. “Return, return,” the melody seem to say ; and it brimmed with regret, with longing, with sorrow, it charmed him to oblivion of his wounds. And then the singer came into view and moved towards him slowly.

She was a young woman clad in a dress of some kind of sprigged calico over which she wore a little grey cloak and hood ; and she carried a garden basket filled with white roses. The hood had fallen back, so that the surgeon saw her fair side-curles and the black velvet band retaining them. Her face . . . . ? her face . . . . ? It was his lady of dream ! She still sang, her grey eyes musing and

## CHAPTER VIII

### MORAG

STRAIGHT and tall as a spear, despite his limp, was this young man that went about Aros township after three days more of his bed. The gossip ran that MacNab, the island surgeon, was expected soon, and that the stranger awaited his skill: otherwise his business had instantly taken him south. But some of the older folk, who had recognised Drumfin, and in whose remembrance Culloden day burned clear and bright as the fire of the torturer, were none so sure of the tale, and, with nodding heads, looked uncanny things.

He had a kindly face, if a plain one, this shipwrecked man; yet clean-shaven as he was, you saw his features for strong and resolute. As often as not he walked abroad bareheaded, a shovel hat of MacLean's under his arm, his own dark hair tied in a bag-ribbon. What took the *cailleachean* more than anything, setting them to vigorous scoldings of the distrustful among their men-folk—was his essay at the Gaelic: a phrase or two picked up from his father, and these in a voice, manly, with notes of rare tenderness. This voice was his grand asset against suspicion; but it is also true that he had a way with little children that went to the heart. Tiny maids smiled fearlessly to him, as they had never smiled to a grown-up all their days; and when he carved a ship for Callum Beag's little

son, whittling it with his left hand from a billet of wood held between his knees, the child and his mates crowded silently around and hailed him with frank looks as a comrade who understood the freemasonry of boyhood.

But at times the sense of intimacy failed; the stranger seemed alien, restless, and impatient; and this cottar and that had repeated enquiries from him as to the coming of the surgeon from the Ross. Even the laird, abstracted as he was in his schemes of adjusting his properties' management to the changing times—bored daily now, as Martinmas term drew near, by tacksman and crofter regarding wadsets and services—even the worried laird saw through Fraser's courteous attempts at dissimulation of his uneasiness. Vaguely he now thought of the young man as a naval officer on some Government survey or the like, for Drumfin had not discovered Fraser's identity to him. Spy he could not hold him, let Pennyfuaran rage as he would. Was it not plain he but awaited the coming of Doctor MacNab to mend his arm? And yet there was a gravity in the demeanour of his guest, a suddenness in the way he roused himself from fits of meditation, that bespoke something more than this only. "God help him! it's maybe my own case," said Aros half-humorously, half-bitterly, and holding his tobacco pipe aloft to chuckle more at ease. "God help him! He may be even in the south there as I am here—setting tacks of good land far below market value to keep old friends from breaking."

A week had passed since the injury to the arm, and

grimly still as he beheld himself embarked on a different course—a course that would take him, he knew, far from a speedy return to the orlop-deck of the *Theseus*. Yet this smile ironical was one of recognition also, since he saw himself about to indulge a familiar passion, that of burning his boats behind him : for it was thus he was wont to secure himself against retreat from his ideals. In the end, however, he had a moment of insight and self criticism.

“Duty be damned, sir : it’s sheer vanity,” he told himself, as his contemplated course of action came clearly into view.

Yet the truthfulness of this conclusion was easily outweighed by its unpalatableness, and he soon took a more charitable view of the case. His plans must have matured rapidly, for he suddenly halted in his slow pacing, wheeled right about, and went off swiftly to the cottage of Callum Beag. Here he found the tiny one with the ruddy curls, and, selecting his billet with care, he set to work whittling untiredly. Golden-head asked what queer ships were these he made ; and Callum himself cast not a few wondering glances at the flat slips of wood the young man fashioned. Little Neil was assured that a big and proper ship would be built to-morrow, but it needed many kisses from Fraser to chase the tears away, when the brown eyes saw the result of the day’s toil stowed away in the big playfellow’s coat-skirts.

The wooden slips were still in the pockets of the surgeon when early in the forenoon of the following day he made his way to the garden that lay by the

side of Aros House. It was an old pleasure-ground, cinctured by high walls hid in a green cloak of ivy and tiny fern, and without this again by a screen of oaks. So sheltered was it that October airs had left roses and hollyhocks in wild profusion and full bloom. Less favoured flowers were gone a month past, but these held out gallantly, and backed by hedges of dark laurel and copper beech, made a brave splash of colour in a place with more than a hint in it of the dour and sombre. The gravelled walks between box borders converged to a mounded sundial, about whose base hartstongue and royal grew lush and large, and set facing this, on a crescent of turf, was a bench of rough-hewn stone, mossy and weather-beaten.

Fraser seated himself on the worn flags. It was the ninth day of his sojourn in Aros, and a grey day it was, the clouds too much for the sun, a wind from the sea volleying through the glens, but absent from this nook of perfume and rich hues. Of a morning, he had observed that Miss Morag came here for flowers, presumably for house decoration, and so he awaited her approach, the volume in which he meant to appear absorbed, dangling at the length of his long left arm.

At a click of the gate he rose, and bareheaded as he was, lifted his hand to his forehead in salute to the girl as she entered. Morag flushed a little at sight of him and gave him good-morning. She had indeed seen very little of the mysterious stranger save at meal-times, and although she joined in the general conspiracy of suspicion regarding him, at heart she was frankly curious as to the real nature



appearances dubious in their very essence? He spread hands deprecating, but her foot tapped angrily on the russet leaves.

"An answer," she said, unmoved, unbending.

"Listen, then," said he. "Conceive my situation on my first awakening in Aros, when my last memories were of rocks and breakers. Gratitude and gratitude only, was in all my thoughts."

Her foot still tapped; her eyes still burned.

"Gratitude, yes. But could I tell you what dangers came before the storm and my casting—away, dangers not to the body alone, madam, but to the very element you deem me lacking in, a little thing called honour—if I could show you this, you would understand how to gratitude succeeded alarm."

Briefly he recounted the happenings on his first night under her father's roof. He flushed a little as he told of his discovery at the study door; he flushed more darkly still as he observed a little threatening movement of her brow and lips that cried "Eavesdropper" louder than any words, and he paused as the meaning of the look came on him suddenly.

"Ah," he said simply, "you will not understand."

"And little wonder!" she cried cruelly. "It was not among court trustys I was bred."

"Trusty?" he said, wincing, white to the lips. "I am not that. I have told you the cold truth. But I am no spy."

"At least you're in the Hanoverian's service," she said, with a fine inconsequence. "And you're Hanover in politics also, I'll wager."

"That's as maybe, madam. Yet till this moment I have never heard it charged as the equivalent of the informer's meanness."

"You'll be telling me next, you're Jacobite," she said.

"And I shall think it no crime, Miss MacLean, to confess I am not."

"Tush! then it's plain you're Hanover."

"Madam, if you'll have it so." He bowed in irony. "But are we not twenty years back, if we make the distinction?"

"Are we indeed so far afield?" she asked, her uplifted eyebrows eloquent. "Then why does a poor gentleman from Paris so disquiet you?"

"The Prince—" he began and paused. "Surely you cannot think that cause anything but hopeless?"

"Ah, there shows the advocate at last!" she cried. "Hopeless? And why, sir? Do you think the Highlands are of yesterday, that even our Prince's failings can make us forget the tales of the years, or the hopes they stir? Give us again the old ways and the old life. Is it not worth wounds and cold hearths to bring them back? Give us the chief—the kindly chief, and his people—the kindly people. And let the Prince—" She halted.

"Let the Prince take his own gate?" said Fraser, smiling.

A little dimness came to the girl's fine eyes. "Ah, no," she said softly. "It's in a green quiet glen of old Albainn I'd make his home—one whence he'd see the sky stretched over the sea, and the sun going down in it—where he'd be having the dear

memories of the days of the heroes. And, oh, it's kindness, kindness, and nothing of reproach I'd be for giving him ! ”

“ And would he reign, your fairy Prince ? ” asked the man smiling.

She turned on him, elate of a sudden, quivering with emotion, her ideal on her brow. “ And even if he has failed us, Mr. Fraser—even if he has failed us ? Look you, there's never a clear night in Aros, sir, but I can find a new star in the sky.” A prophetess—a sybil—beautiful and young, yet with the wisdom of years on her lips—it was thus he saw her as he stood at gaze, and her passion of conviction was so infective that he sighed.

“ Ah,” he said, “ if I could only believe. But I am, I fear, a Laodicean for either faction. ‘ A plague on both your houses,’ say I.”

“ Even Hanover ? ” she asked with the eagerness of the proselytiser who sees a hint of response to her efforts.

“ Even Hanover,” he said, “ since I've seen the Americas, where in his own colonies your Hanoverian oppresses to the death.”

There was silence for a little now, and Fraser made an effort to leave this ground already so torn with the conflict as to render further fencing unsafe.

“ But all this is foreign to your question regarding winter in the south, Miss Morag,” he said abruptly.

The girl reddened, remembering her ruse to bring this man to speak of himself. Her head dropped suddenly to watch a foot tossing dead leaves to and fro, and so brought her fair side-curls from out her hood of pink sarcenet to hide cheeks flaming. In

her present mood of missionary of her ideals, she was wildly angry with herself for the prying meanness of her earlier attitude, as she reckoned it; and she did not answer.

"And yet, madam, if you will but allow, I had rather turn to something of more moment than any of our recent topics. Will you overlook what must seem a monstrous impertinence in me, if I speak of a matter personal, and on so brief acquaintance?"

But the girl was still wroth with herself, and therefore distrustful of a further passage of arms.

"You must make me no confidences, sir," she said fiercely. "I forbid it."

"I beg of you—" he protested.

"Nay, then, you send me away," and she made as if to leave him.

"I must risk the offence, madam," he said.

"You desert a sinking ship, I fear."

The metaphor caught her, and she halted on the going.

"It was of set purpose I came here this morning," he went on. "It is all so sudden, so strange, so abrupt, I know; but I came to ask a service of you. There is none here in whom I can so safely confide."

Startled anew, Morag looked up at his grave face, but composed herself with an effort.

"Then in that case," she said, "it were best that we walked up and down while I gather a rose or two for my basket. 'For,' she added, innocently enough imputing herself, "I must avow that curiosity is not a new trait in some folks hereabout."

## CHAPTER IX

### FRASER'S TALE

THEY paced slowly under the ivy-covered walls, and round the roses odorous ; and here, as in a cloistral stillness, they heard the sea-wind calling in the outer world of shore and hill, while not a dead leaf stirred to it at their feet.

" Yes," said Fraser, " I have thought of everyone : yourself remains. And first of all it is some part of my own story you must hear, for it may help you to a better opinion of me than of a spy."

" Mr. Fraser ! " she cried, protesting.

" Your pardon, then. But here is the tale," he said. . . . " I have been for three years surgeon in the Navy of this Hanoverian you detest, and—to be exact—I was surgeon's mate five weeks ago on board the *Theseus*, 84 guns. It was late July when we left Louisburg, and early August when we came down to the Virginias, and so home."

" The Virginias ? " cried Morag, " why 'tis there that Cousin Elspeth lives. Pray, tell me, is there further trouble with the Governor ? "

" Still trouble, madam. And to my mind the Assembly has the right of it."

" Yes, yes," she answered. " But do not let me interrupt, I beg of you.—The *Theseus*, you said ? "

" The *Theseus*, yes. Our orders were sealed. But when we were nearing Scotland, it was plain our business lay there, for no sooner did we lift the

Lewis than we set to cruising about it in the strangest of fashions."

"Ah!" said Morag, her grey eyes flickering swiftly with sudden fire.

"And if it was not the Long Isle, it was Skye, and in rough weather, too. It was common talk that the French desired a diversion from the attentions of King George on the St. Lawrence; and, indeed, to speak plainly it was hinted your friend, the Young Chevalier, was about to aid them by repeating his Scottish visit of fourteen years ago."

He stopped, laughing gently but outright in his scepticism.

The fire in the grey eyes flamed high. "It seems you think it no likely tale, sir," she said coldly. "But pray, go on. I remember the storms of August."

"The storms, yes, and fogs also, Madam. We had to anchor three days in Lochboisdale, no pilot to be had, and the mist like curtains of parchment. When we came out it was clearer a little, though still dirty weather, and we drove south and south, until at the end we lost our reckoning 'twixt Coll and Tiree."

"I remember the fogs," said Morag impassively.

"We flew signals, we fired guns, and at last a smack came off from the Tiree shore, with a pilot on board. He, however, would come with us on one condition only; and since we could not press-gang him in the middle of squalls and mist, we had to accept his terms. His kinsman was at death's door, and if he came aboard us, then we

must send a surgeon ashore to him : he would not leave his cutter, he said, until a doctor was put over the ship's side. And so it was that I was sent, while the frigate went off in a driving sleet."

"Nay, sir, now I remember. The *Theseus*? Did she not sail safely into the Bay of Tobermory one day a full month ago, coming down the Sound a week later? A great tall ship she was, too," said Morag, forgetting her politics for the moment, while her fine eyes danced at the romance of the bargain. "And the pilot's kinsman?"

"Ah, poor body, he died before I reached his bedside."

"Ah, he died? Poor pilot! Does he know yet, I wonder? Poor pilot!" said the girl pensively. "But," she went on, her voice changing quickly—"but if you are a surgeon in the Navy of this man you call King, why do you await the coming of a simple country physician to mend your arm?"

"Because I wish no one to know I am a surgeon—the surgeon from the *Theseus*, who landed in Tiree some five weeks ago. For by all tokens, that is a man who'll have cold comfort from some folks in the Isles if he is discovered. And, meanwhile, here is this arm of mine that will be healing in a pretty crook before your Doctor MacNab arrives, if there be none to help me with it."

He looked enquiringly at the girl, and even the light falling on her cheek from her hood of pink silk, could not hide her sudden pallor.

"Oh, what do you wish? I'll do it at the telling," she said in a strained voice.

"Hush ! It is but a little thing, if a needful, Miss Morag. We shall want some handfuls of wool and some strips of linen rag."

"I'll carry them under the roses in my basket," she suggested, a faint smile dawning on her trembling lips, "—under the white roses, sir."

"You will have your jest, madam," he said. "I fear I put you to a vast annoyance."

She murmured indistinctly in reply and went off at once towards the house, whilst Fraser stalked over the fallen leaves, his little volume to his nose, but an impatient eye on the garden gate. He sighed in relief, when she returned, the least trifle breathless.

"Will it please you—will it please you to sit beside me here on the bench, whilst I unwrap this arm of mine ?" said he.

They seated themselves, the girl on his left and more breathless now.

"'Tis work more fitting for a man, Miss Morag, but, as I say, I have no choice in the matter."

He lifted the sling, and throwing back the shoulder of his sleeveless coat, showed the swollen limb. Then he produced two flat pieces of wood from the skirts of the garment.

"All I ask from you is a pull with your right hand on mine : a hearty handshake as it were," he said.

The girl bit her lip savagely, and her hand went to her heart. But Fraser looking up in alarm at the sudden movement, her fingers strayed from the flowered calico over a breast that heaved to the lace of her pelerine, and, adjusting the knot there, she said, with a tremulous assumption of calm :



there was the packet for sailing when the storm had passed, but go I could not. And afterwards—well, there were other storms. . . . But oftener it was my inclination—my sentiment—call it what you will, that kept me back. . . . Kept me back until the thing happened that now keeps me in hiding here. . . . Kept me back until I had tied myself to one fleeing from what was only rough justice, for he had killed a fellow-creature. Who he was matters little now, for he died off Aros Point nine days ago. And then—why then, though no sheriff's writ runs in these outer isles of the sea, as you know, there's the clan—or, despite the late acts, the spirit of the clan—not yet dead. So, because of the clan this man fled; and because of the clan Ian Fraser hides his skill of surgery, and asks a woman to do ungentle tasks."

"Oh, sir, how I am grieved for you," was all she said, and by the least movement of her head her fair side-curles were again let droop, this time to hide her eyes.

Fraser gulped a little. It was the one heartily friendly word he had heard for a weary time, and it came from one who seemed to understand. So far, it had done him good to relieve his soul, but he was now dangerously near to elaborating a melancholy that was not unpleasant. Did the girl intuitively recognise the way he went downwards? or was it really a return of suspicion on her part that made her say:

"And so I did you an injustice, Mr. Fraser, in thinking your chief concern was for your Government's danger from us poor Jacobites. Yet all the

while it was but your anxiety to keep your own skin whole ? ”

The shaft stung, not by reason of its keenness, but because he felt the blow unfair, and, flushing, he decided on an immediate retiral. Yet thinking he saw the rogue in her eye, he forgave the stroke instantly, and, smiling, said :

“ You see too deeply into motives for me to risk a longer stay, so permit my withdrawal before you rend every mask of fair appearance from me. My thanks for your aid in surgery, madam ; and I leave you to your roses.”

She looked down at her foot tapping the fallen leaves, and framed a reply of speech more gracious ; she smiled her kindest. But the wicket clicked, and he was gone.

from any chance-comer's eye at the wicket there ; let us take the path behind the yews, ill-omened as they are, for I've much to tell to the little sister."

They left the seat for a path that ran some twenty paces behind it, a clump of yews and hollies intervening ; and they had but reached the further end of the track, when Fraser, unnoticed, returned for his forgotten volume. He had just found it, when there came from behind the thick wall of trees the sound of voices—a girl's and a man's. The girl's he recognised instantly for Morag's. But the man's—? It seemed as if his every fibre became rigid at the well-known sound. It was the voice of Cattanach.

As if impelled by some power not himself he stole close to the dark foliage, and peered through. The tousel of blonde silken hair, the full blue eye, the cursed simper : Cattanach it was, without a doubt, and his arm encircled Morag. Fraser choked at the sight, and his temple pulses hammered ; his vision failed, and he clung to a branch unsteadily. Then, as he heard them address each other as brother and sister, a profuse sweat broke over him, and he slid weakly to his knees among the rank grass. The contradiction was too unnatural, too terrible : this man, base to the depths of all cunning—this man, brother to that creature of fire and spirit and high ideals, habiting a world of beauty he knew nothing of !

A word or two of their talk came to him ; his horror increased a hundredfold, and he stumbled unsteadily, yet stealthily to his feet and sought the wicket unperceived.

Behind the yews the young man with the prominent blue eyes was smiling down on Morag.

"Yes; in affairs at last, dearie," he said. "In affairs, at last, I tell you." He pranced a step of dancing and gaily dangled his cloak from side to side.

"You take the affairs lightly enough then, sir," she smiled. "You mean—?"

"I mean that I have the news from Glengarry, and that there is no surer hand, Morag."

"The Prince, Norman?"

"Yes, the Prince, madam. He is coming again and soon."

There were instantly tears of quiet happiness in the girl's eyes.

"Ah!" she sighed contentedly, and that was all. Then, after a space, doubt returned. "But can it be really true?" she asked.

"As certain as the sunrise to-morrow morn," he answered. "Murray and Clancarty have arranged it all. Choiseul and Belle-Isle have promised. Prussia will help, if need be. The British fleet is busy in the Canadas, and we have two of the best admirals that ever sailed blue water—Conflans and Thurot."

"La! there are fine names in plenty, sir. Is there never a Highland one besides the Murray?"

"The little sister, the little sister!" He patted her shoulder with the air of the well-pleased tutor. "Of course, of course: for there's never a clan on Lochgarry's old list but that we'll have it out in better numbers than ever. And what do you think? Besides the raid on the Highlands there's London

to be attacked. Oh ! I'll warrant you, we'll show them war."

"War !" said Morag fiercely, her eyes ablaze.

"War !" he cried. "And who think you is his Highness' *chargé-d'affaires* in the Isles ?"

"Oh, Norman, who but yourself ?"

The young man seemed startled for a moment at the thought.

"But, no—blessing on you!—what are you thinking of, girl ? It's scarcely so far forward I am. No, no. It's an old friend and a staunch—Drumfin, if you please ; and he is in Tیره, I hear."

"Drumfin ?" cried the girl, "but his haunts of Aros Isle, sir ; and with no thought of renewing acquaintance with friends and acquaintances. So I his youth—the exile's eternal weakness. 'Tis not fear your story's miscarried, Norman's Drumfin."

As she spoke, she missed the flicker of secret satisfaction in the blue eye of her corselet, snapped finger and thumb and hopped as in sheer delight.

"The story is true enough, I tell you," he said, halting before her, his hands on her shoulders. "But 'tis as you say about Drumfin. When he came to Scotland he knew nothing of all this ; 'twas a world of difference. Timely on the part of Clancarty's plan, you see, if arrested spot, Drumfin would know nothing of the hour before the affair was ripe. But he came, who struck, and his Highness' commission will you tell more active and trusty than Drumfin, to use him. me ? 'Twas part of the plan, I say."

And, indeed, things could not have fallen out better than they have done."

"Why," said Morag in a solemn surprise, "we're in the very heart of it, dear brother, it would seem."

Norman evidently saw less of the high seriousness of the case in which they stood, for he skipped delightedly again.

"In the very heart of it!" he cried. "Think of it, *mo chridhe*! What happiness!"

She blushed, and smiled gladly back to him.

"Why," she said. "'Tis but half an hour since Drumfin passed this very spot."

"Lord!" cried the youth, paling through his ivory skin. "You do not tell me he is even in my father's house?"

"It's just the same I'm telling you," said Morag.

He glanced around slowly and furtively, his face grave, as if he feared meeting Drumfin's quiet eye at any point.

"Never?" he said. "Alone?"

"Yes, alone—. But no, not now. For such a queer man came to him this morning—an Irish pedlar, by his looks. Indeed, it was but a little ago, as I say, that they went down this alley together."

Norman bit his lip savagely. "Ay," he said, quite chapfallen at this last piece of news. "And he'd have a red box—this pedlar—a red box on his shoulders, Morag?"

"The very man, Norman."

"Just as Glengarry wrote me," said he musingly.

"By the Lord, he's got the route already then."

"The route?" asked Morag.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FAIRIES' CASTLE

THAT night Fraser awoke to a grip on his injured arm. Past the undrawn curtains of his chamber-window there poured the glory of moonlight, its spectral beams whorled on the bare wooden floor by the bull's-eyes in the lozened panes, and in the faint radiance he beheld the face of Belle, the Aros House servant, scared almost to the ridiculous.

"Sir, oh, sir," she whispered; "rise, or you will be killed," and vanished.

He guessed her meaning instantly, and, too good a seaman to overdo the hurrying, clad himself quietly and effectively against the hint of cold in the air. Then, as he opened the door a crack and peered out, his left arm was suddenly seized, and he flung back so fiercely from the grasp that the door clattered to the shaking wall. His sound hand went to his hanger, but he withdrew it when he saw the pencils of moonlight strike on a woman's figure clad in a cloak, whose hood encircled the pale face of Morag MacLean.

She beckoned him silently, and he followed her downstairs, where again she took his hand. Thence they glided, rustling and tip-toe, along a narrow wood-lined corridor to a final flight of steps that left them on a floor of flags. A door opened from this cold room on a bit of rough lawn above the river; and across the open ground, swept by

frosty airs and moonlight, they ran noiselessly, save for the jingle of a chain-catch on Fraser's cloak. They reached the shelter of the leafless birches fringing the stream, found the great stepping-stones uncovered, the water racing swift and black under tinkling plaques of new-born ice, and, crossing to the further side, the open was taken again on a slight ascent. Then, the track running beneath some oak and hazel, the few squares of orange light that marked the House of Aros were lost to view. It was here Morag turned eagerly to her companion.

" 'Tis the Tíree MacLeans, Mr. Fraser : they have come sooner than you thought, you see. Did you not know that the man who did this thing was cousin to my father in the second degree ? Did you not guess the dead man's friends would come knocking at my father's gates in their search for the slayer ? "

" I knew him for your father's cousin," said Fraser wearily.

" Then you should also have known that you risked your life doubly in Aros ; for even if these Sunivaig men should discover that cousin Angus is dead, they would still hold you guilty, in that you aided his escape. And they are indeed savage, these folk : pit and gallows at Duart used to know them well in the olden days, when they were roving in the isle. The dark ones ! their curses as black as the knives they fingered ! "

" Knives ? " asked Fraser, halting and looking back.

She interpreted the glance at once, and said coldly :



"My father? Oh, he is safe enough; or is it here his daughter would be? Drumfin is returned, and with him."

"Did they indeed threaten with knives?" asked Fraser gloomily, as they resumed the path.

"Why, yes. Their hands were busy enough, though they never drew steel. There were seven, and Deaf Alan to head them, if you please."

"Deaf Alan?"

"You do not know him, sir? He who wrote the wicked book for the London printer, and was unfrocked for it."

"Lord," said Fraser, "books and printers are many in London town and both are wicked, madam. I've no traffic with them, you may be sure, or I'd never be the saint I am, Miss Morag."

"Jest as you will, 'twas a grave enough matter for us three an hour ago, when these wild men broke in on us. My father and Drumfin were discussing some lines of Virgil; and I was busy at bits of estate-work, when there came a knocking, and forthwith these islesmen entered without a by-your-leave. Then before the parley was well begun the dear father saw it all—he that is for ordinary so excitable—and what does he do, but, cool as a court-lawyer, take up my tally-book and scribble your name across the figures."

"I see," said Fraser.

"I understood him at once, and in order to send Belle to you, slipped off as naturally and as soon as my fears would allow."

"I see," said Fraser. "Did they appear to suspect my presence in Aros?"

"Why no : how should they ? "

"Then what danger to me does your father fear ? "

"Oh, you don't know these wild isles of the sea, the clans of them ! " cried Morag. "News goes fast, and they'll not be long in Aros without hearing of you. There's Deaf Alan—the smooth one—little will pass him. Oh, had you but seen him stroking his dirk-sheath before my father's face—the bold one ! He's mad for the old ways—"

"A little weakness of your own, is it not, Miss Morag ? " interjected Fraser, smiling.

"Tush ! " and she halted to stamp her foot—  
"Will you still jest on occasion so serious, sir ? 'Tis for the old ways he is mad, I say ; but 'tis for the worst as well as the best. And with him the clan's very teeth must be paid for. Let me tell you, sir, that if he is in the isle to-morrow, and routing for news of his quarry, there will be no safety for you in Aros township. Thus we take time by the forelock to-night ; but it's in rough fashion you must pass the dark hours at the Fairies' Castle, I fear. Do you know it ? "

"Not I," said Fraser blankly, with a shrug of his shoulders ; and as if careless of whatever chance befel him, he stared upwards at the stars dusted over the clear blue sky above.

"I pray you," chid the girl, "not so hopeless, if it please you."

"Indeed," he said, smiling, "it is not as you surmise. My thought is rather that we magnify the danger unduly."

"Oh ! " she cried, and crimsoned darkly, and he saw his error instantly.

"Your pardon," he said. "I—"

"And can you believe me so fond of midnight adventures with a stranger, sir, as to seize the least pretext for them? Do you imagine Highland usage as less delicate than that of the South?"

Fraser inwardly cursed his blundering, and sought for a word of excuse, but she spoke again before he found it.

"The man you helped was kinsman to my father, let me remind you: and so it is that I am here. Please you, follow me."

Imperative, she took the woodland way at a rapid pace, leaving the man no choice but obedience, and he pursued her lithe steps in laggard fashion, with something like sulking in his air, until he beheld her turn with a gesture of impatience, and await him. Instantly, fearing a second outpouring of her wrath, he capitulated.

"I crave pardon," he said. "I am a selfish boor, I confess. I shall do as you wish, madam."

Her eyes flashed, and she made no reply. But she pushed on, as if to hide the tumult of her thoughts. Oh, soon, soon, she told herself, he would learn to think of the Gael in truer fashion. Soon he would see what chivalry was—what loyal hearts could dare; and he and his breed would no longer sneer every generous impulse out of life. Her Prince—her Prince was coming—was coming again! . . . . How she would humble this man! But—failure? Ah, should the Prince fail—what then? . . . . Oh, then would she show him how his great spirit bore its sorrow—how ten thousand hearts were broken in the breaking of her Prince's heart! . . . .

And there also should this Southerner find humiliation . . . . . in the thought that he had helped in victory so shameful . . . . .

Suddenly it came on her with a glow of her whole being that she was unusually preoccupied with plans for the discipline of this stranger's spirit. Was it because a hint of a reason for all this dawned on her, that she began to make endeavours after a return to matter-of-fact by urging him to a faster pace ?

"A little quicker, I pray you," she said. "You do not know whom we flee, sir, or your steps were lighter."

They went on over the mossy track that now left the wood and took them by a rampart of rock to a steeper ascent of the hill. The winds of the day had fallen, and far beneath, they saw the Sound, quiet in unwonted fashion, the moon's path fair and unrippled from Innimore to Aros. A croaking heron flapped shorewards from the wood they had left ; a stoat, already in winter-white, flashed and halted, and flashed again across their path ; for the rest, the hare and the blackcock were the only living things that stirred. Higher still they climbed, their breathing a little faster now, and the fragrance of bog-myrtle around them. They passed between the twin-peaks of a little hill, and the girl looked round, shivering in a faint breeze that was now felt on the western side of the height.

"Oh, I trust I have not misled," she said feebly, looking out over the great fields of mountains spread fair and far beneath the moonlight's witchery.

"I can see two waters only, but as yet not our

mark—the loch in the west there. Further still, sir. Come.”

They descended into a little plain with many little pools of peaty water in it, and not without difficulty advanced towards a great mound in front, where soon the outline of massed stones on its summit rose black against the azure of the sky.

“ Ah,” said Morag, “ the Castle.”

The escalade of the steep little hill on which the ruin stood was stiff work. Twice the girl, exhausted, slipped on the wet turf ; and, at last assenting to Fraser’s appeal, she seated herself on a boulder on the eastern face of the ascent in order to await his return.

When at last Fraser had climbed the hundred feet or so of rock-strewn hill-side, he found himself on a little plateau with a rude wall, massive though dry-built, surrounding its almost circular outline. The ruin must indeed be ancient, he pondered ; testimony of its age lay even in the meagreness of the remnant left, for although the wall was some ten feet in thickness, its height measured only half this at most. Here and there were hollows, marking where chambers or stairs had opened, and he noted how these might offer hiding from an enemy, or shelter in stress of weather. For the rest the hill was an ideal place of refuge, and commanded the isle as from an eyrie. Yonder were two of the signs for which the girl had asked : Loch Frisa to the north, the Sound to the east. And now a shimmer of moonlit tides gave the third of the marks, for here Loch-na-Keal, an arm from the Atlantic, was thrust inwards to the island’s

mountain-roots. At sight of these surrounding waters, the sailor in Fraser came dominant, and unconsciously he fell to admiring the strategy of these builders of earlier years, who—plainly sailors as well as warriors—had so wisely chosen this vantage-ground in the waist of the isle. He dreamed on the past and saw again their beaked galleys float darkly on the wave—a Viking argosy. His imaginings, indeed, took him so completely from himself, that for the moment he had quite forgotten the matter he had in hand and the meaning of his errand among these moonlit hills, when a faint cry came to him, a woman's wail, and he suddenly recalled his plight, his waiting companion, and all the ordeal of the present hour.

He scrambled down the eastern face of the hill, and looked for the girl's figure, but the westering moon made shadow here—shadow as of ebony, and he stumbled as he went, seeing no sign of her. "Miss Morag," he called; yet the only reply was the eastward-flowing wind calling *hush* among the grasses. An echo from the twin-peaked hill startled him as he called again, and then in a flash, this lone high moorland with its tussocks of creamy moss, and its peaty pools through which he plashed desperate—this harmony of gloom and fair lights as of mother-o'-pearl, became a horror to his soul.

He plodded distracted around the base of the Castle hill, and ever his call in the dark brought wilder fears as it echoed fainter and fainter in the high gullies above Aros. Oh, worse than fool, he thought, that he should do this thing! Was it to save a poltroon such as he from a scuffle with some

islesmen that this high-spirited lass had risked so much? Oh, fool; oh, fool! Again and again he called her name, beside himself with apprehension.

He had made the circuit of the great mound unrewarded, and now, the mosswater at his ankles, he stood at bay and looked around. Then his eye found a spot of whiteness in the gloom, and he strained upwards to it instantly. It was Morag's face. The girl lay pale and breathing faintly: and she smiled wanly, but spiritedly to him before she closed her eyes in a spasm of pain.

"You are hurt?" he cried, kneeling beside her.

"A sprain only, I think," she answered, and again the wan smile. "And of all places the fashionable one, if I may judge from your sling, sir surgeon—the right arm."

It seemed that after she had rested a little, she had attempted to follow him up the hill. Then a foot slipped, the wrist doubled under her, and the pain had been so great as to cause her fainting.

"Look at it, surgeon," she said. "Would not a fracture there be more *à la mode*?"

Fraser examined the wrist, and was able to assure her that a sprain was the worst that had happened. Her kerchief, dipped in a stream, served as a temporary dressing, and the surgeon halved his sling of silk to share it with her. Then they turned homewards.

"And so you come back to Aros with me to see me safe? I protest 'tis a Highland convoy this," said Morag gaily.

"And how?" asked Fraser.

"Oh, one sees a friend home to his lodging, and

then the friend returns the favour. And so they may go on for a round of the clock."

"Ah," said Fraser absently, "how I regret that sprain!"

"Oh, la! as if I had not done well enough by guiding you once, sir?" she said archly.

It was now the surgeon's turn to show a high colour.

"Oh, 'twas not of the Scotch convoy I was thinking," he said rather awkwardly.

For reply, she tossed her fair side-curls.

"I mean—I should be vastly pleased—" he stammered.

"Because of the sprain?" asked the rogue.

"How strangely you mingle pleasure and regret, sir!"

Thereupon Fraser assumed a moody silence, finding himself so poor a match in this wordy warfare; a hundred sharp retorts rose in his mind, indeed, yet an opening never came for any of the weapons he fashioned so finely. But now, as they regained the mossy plain, and the uneven ground made progress more difficult, not a little satisfaction mingled with his solicitude, as he saw her bite her nether lip when a false step in the gloom jarred her injured arm. The agony of the wrist was in truth at one time so great that she swayed a little as if about to faint again.

"You are still pained," said he, coming close to her. "Will you take my arm?"

"La! indeed, sir; and which?"

She laughed gleefully, if feebly, and her old self was in her voice, as she demonstrated the difficulty of the problem.



"You cannot come to my left side, sir, for 'twould then be your maimed right arm I'd sacrifice. And if you take the other side, what of my poor hand?"

She laughed again, but despite her gaiety, swayed in a sudden pallor, and there was nothing for it but his left arm round her waist.

"'Tis a trifle awkward, I confess," said she faintly, when the first shock of surprise at his daring had passed. "Yet if we can but keep step we'll do none so badly. What monstrously frail creatures we be, that a little pain should so unsteady us! Let us give thanks, Mr. Fraser, that it was no worse. An ankle now! La! how horrible!"

Half-way back to Aros she suggested that she felt better and might do without his aid, and so Fraser relinquished his grasp reluctantly and by stages.

They approached the township cautiously lest the Tíree men should be abroad, but at last they halted without mishap at the stepping-stones on the Preacher's River.

"There now is one part of a debt discharged," sighed the girl. "And Angus MacLean's kinswoman will sleep the sounder to-night because of it. I've shown you the best hiding in all the countryside, sir, so back to it as fast as you can, if you are wise; for though Aros is safety for me, 'tis danger still for you. To-morrow I'll send you food and news by the trustiest I can find. *Slan leat.*"

"And what is that, Miss Morag?"

"Why 'tis the good word of farewell I'm giving you."

They shook hands left-handed, but like good comrades, and she went down the bank to the first of the stepping-stones. Fraser stood dark in the moonlight, watching her as she balanced unfairly on it, a crust of thin ice crackling under her feet ; and he saw how her hurt hand, entangled in the folds of her cloak was suddenly disengaged to check her unsteadiness, as she slipped and retreated to the hither side again ; so, tossing off his sling, he was beside her in an instant.

“ Your permission,” he said.

And all in a dream she felt herself lifted and borne over the boulders in the bed of the stream. Momently he paused when he reached the birches on the other side, before he set her down, but in that second he had turned her face from his own shadow, so that the moonlight fell on her broad forehead and quiet eyes. There was something in her look that was eloquent of understanding, something of pity for his lot, and something also, that, despite her recent merriment, mingled all these with a hint of the old sorrow of the world, and the tragedy of life itself. Passion in that instant came to birth and death in his face, and he placed her gently on earth again, yet not without a grimace of pain at a movement of the splint on his broken arm. Then he held the birch-twigs cavalierly aside, and bent to kiss her fingers.

“ *Slan leat,*” he said, and resuming the stony path across the river, he was soon high on the moonlit heath once more.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE THREE MEN

FRASER waked where he couched in a niche of the Castle wall, to the crowing of cocks, distant and multitudinous in Aros township. Stiff, despite the heaped bracken over and under him, he shivered in the frosty air and looked eastwards for the dawn. But no dawn was there ; and he noted that the moon floated only an hour's space lower in the heavens than when he settled to rest, yet what a pother all the fowls in Aros were making. For sure there was something astir down there.

He moved out from his shelter and advanced to that portion of the broken bastion looking towards the village. And then ere he had barely distinguished the shadows of bosage around the mansion, he fell back again within the circle of the ruin, and stole cautiously to his hiding. Two figures were climbing the Castle-mound about a dozen yards beneath him, and indistinctly he was aware of several other forms on the mossy flat below. He called to mind desperately that the moon was setting behind his chosen chamber of hiding, and that the shadows of the broken wall would aid. And then, hardly had he pushed the bracken over the opening of his little nook—hardly was his hanger laid ready to his left hand, and his injured limb comfortably disposed, ere the new-comers appeared, sprawling over the broad wall of the fort.

He noted the bonnets of thrum, the leg bare between short breeks and stockings, the feet-coverings of hairy hide, as peculiarities of dress unusual in Aros, and he guessed the men accordingly as out-dwellers. Yet their attire did not suggest Tiree men as he knew them. Who could they be? There were six in all at first, and they stood in a group, gabbling uncouthly, until a squat figure swung over the wall and joined them, signalling to a corner of the enclosure not ten paces from where Fraser lay. Here they crouched around a bundle of twigs that was soon alight, and the watcher breathed easily, for it seemed that a bivouac and not a search was imminent. A brew of some kind was set in a pannikin hung from three cross-sticks, and as the blaze grew stronger, Fraser discovered the last arrival more clearly. In his huge cloak of many capes, which flapped like evil wings with every motion of the man, his tricorne with a plain cock, his stockings and buckled shoon, he passed for a person of quality compared with his company. These, however, made little ado regarding him, but chatted among themselves, whilst he cowered dully alone. But at a turn of the wind he changed positions with one of the men at a sign, and although no word was spoken, there was deference enough shown by the coarser-clad fellow as he gave up his sheltered seat.

This veering of the wind brought with it a stench well-nigh unbearable even to one familiar with the sick-bay of the *Theseus*; for now it whiffed across the encampment, and Fraser viewed with horror the hairy coverings of the clouted feet of these

wild fellows. Yet he soon forgot the odour of the *cuarain* of the strangers, in the revelation of the face and figure of their leader now fairly seen in his new post, curiously lit as he was by mingled lights from moon and fire. The flabby pale cheeks above a not unhandsome beard, the pouched eyelids—these combined with a splay-footed gait and a something of a paunch to suggest the man of the desk rather than of the camp. And then the final touch in the way of identity was the presence of woollen plugs in the ears.

“Deaf Alan and his Sunivaig men,” said Fraser. “But they seek eye for eye in easy fashion surely?”

He tried to argue from their demeanour to the purpose of their presence there. They feared no attack, for no watch was set, and their fire was unscreened. No search was made, so they could not suspect him near. What was it then? Cattle-lifting in prospect or but a partial secrecy before their next move in the blood-hunt? It was only as they grew more voluble with the circling of spirit-horn and snuff-mull that the small Gaelic of which he was master served him finally to perceive that they had news of a deadly sickness in Aros and elsewhere in the countryside; that they now fled the plague; and that for the present at least their quest was forsaken. Said one in Gaelic:

“It’s an old word, ‘When the herring are in the North, Red Murdo is in the South,’ but, please God, we’ll get our fingers on their thrapples yet.”

“Keep the fire lower, Neil, or we’ll make a beacon for all the glens,” said another, kicking out a root the first speaker had just placed on the blaze.

The gnarled mass of wood slid outwards, rolled against a stone supporting Neil's spirit-horn, laid temporarily atilt against it, and at once the vessel was prone, the greedy earth taking the draught. The cup's owner, little and brindled, was instantly at the throat of the other, but the assailed had gained his knees, and his black knife was ready. Sideways they fell, locked and struggling like fighting cats; the burnt earth had them one minute, the hot ashes the next, and at last the gipsy-pot and sticks went headlong over. Then the flabby-cheeked parson stood erect suddenly, his many wings of black cloak flapping; and if his hat was in the embers, yet he held a gillie, torn from each other, in either hand. He kept them apart for some seconds, spoke with something of clerical unction a low soothing word to either, and let them go. Then all sat down to the spirit-horn again. But once more ere dawn broke clear, the quarrellers were at each other's necks, and again the deaf minister plucked them apart as readily as if he but snapped a merrythought.

With the first scad of light in the east the encampment broke up; a rough stirabout of meal was partaken of, and the islesmen departed, clattering down the stone-strewn slopes of the hill's western side. The watcher among the bracken saw them cross the knolls and hollows lying between them and the drove-track leading to the lochs of the west; saw them reach the level and break into a trot, a dot of a figure in a many-winged cloak, hirpling in the rear.

"Here then is my safety," said he. "For this

plague has sent them back to Tiree on the run."

And the next instant he cursed himself for the most selfish of knaves, for a vision of danger from the pest to those in Aros flashed sudden on him. Drumfin? Morag? As if frozen he stood, and in reverie beheld the girl, tall and with a head of a queen, her eyes pity and love, her voice tender to beguiling, her arch smile that seemed the heavenliest thing on earth—beheld her become stricken and wan and sorrowful, her queenly head so lowly. Indeed, he was groaning aloud as he roused himself, and descended the mound on the Aros side.

More than half the distance to the township had been traversed in the grey daybreak, when he stopped at a little pool in a stream near the oak-wood's margin, and, reddening hastily at some passing thought, made a hasty toilet. It was awkward enough attempting the bathing his head and shoulders with one hand, yet even if his face had received attention from both, his frame of mind was such as to leave him dissatisfied with the outer man, and he recognised with another uneasy flush a new-born fastidiousness as to matters of personal appearance—a trait none too common among those accustomed to the rough life of the ship-surgeon.

He finished dressing, and as daylight came fuller, he knelt beside the pool, and looked at the plain features gazing up at him from its mirror of smooth water. Again he dreamt of that fair face so close to his in the moonlight only some hours gone, and instantly he saw clearly the meaning of his

new solicitude for externals. Then hopelessness descended like a pall, and melancholy brought forgetfulness of his task in Aros. Poor, friendless, unhandsome and fugitive: what had he to give? His work . . . . . ambition boundless? Oh, yes, a hunger for his work, fierce as his ambition's appetite, to know surely and to help with certainty in this one thing in a dark world—the suffering of man. Soul and spirit, passion and sin, he would leave to other masters, but give him in this regard the hope of succour to his fellows. To live no idle moment; to concentrate almost savagely his every power toward this end; to hold in vigilant curb the sudden accesses of emotion, of sentiment, that on occasion surprised him out of himself, and left his ideal of unceasing toil at his art, fading and powerless—these were the thoughts he found rising in his mind. He brooded thus for a little and then returned to earth. Abstractedly he smoothed back his wet hair, and attempted to tie his bag-ribbon with one hand, but failing, he left it undone, and turning to take a last look at the pool's mirror, was astonished to see reflected above his face the face of Morag MacLean.

“And, indeed, la! I thought you daft, sir,” she said. “Nay, nay, do not rise. Give me the ribbon.”

With many little tweaks and tugs unnecessarily vicious she bunched the chevelure, and tied the knot.

“There! I hope you'll not again attempt that task unaided. I'll warrant I'll hurt you more next time,” she said. “See,” she went on, holding up



## CHAPTER XIII

### PLAGUE

FRASER found that the laird's attitude to his cousin's death held less of fuss and fever than he anticipated.

"Poor Angus," said Aros gravely, as they sat together in the study, whither he had taken the surgeon in order to thank him for his aid to his relative—"Poor Angus! And so it was he that was with you when the boat went down? A death in the cold Sound! Poor Angus! It was but a bare life for him, in any case. Only a second cousin, Mr. Fraser, but still our kin, you see—our kin. And a tacksman only, sir, but nearer Lachlan Mor in blood than ourselves who count near enough to be a little proud of it. Sir, a glass of wine with you, and again my thanks!"

Over the claret he melted into a mood of half-confidences.

"There's a certain Mr. MacLean of Drumfin staying with us at present," he said. "You may remember meeting him, though somewhat at a disadvantage, on your first night in Aros." He chuckled melodiously. "It might be as well to say nothing to anyone of his being here, Mr. Fraser. You'll understand; it's a matter of a little fondness for a cockade devoid of colour."

Fraser bowed, and the laird returned to ruminating on his second cousin once more.

"Poor Angus, poor Angus! And then these Sunivaig folk," he said. "Heard you ever the like? 'Tis a pretty pass when neither Kirk here nor Sheriff in Inneraora can hold them from routing and roving. There's only the plague to stop them, it seems. Sir, with this way of it in the Highlands, you'll have little love for your father's calf-country, I'm thinking."

Fraser protested himself as not displeased with his adventures so far: last night's lack of sleep was the worst of it, he vowed.

"As regards your safety now," said Aros. "I have gone over things with Drumfin: and he agrees with me that your best chance of the mainland is to keep clear of the beaten tracks—Grasspoint and the like."

"You think so?" said Fraser absently.

"And as for time—well, you're safe as long as this plague holds, for if I know the breed of these Sunivaig men, they'll never show face again till it lifts."

"Ah!" said Fraser brightening, "then in that case, sir, let me help fight the pest until your surgeon arrives."

Aros nodded; and the young man went on with a flushed cheek:

"Not that it's pity only for these sick folk that moves me, you'll understand. There's all that: but beyond it, there's a consideration of more selfish cast; for here as elsewhere I find myself full of hopes of a useful life, no idle moment in it; and here as elsewhere, little or no performance to justify the hopes, sir—nothing but wafts of

sentiment, Heaven knows." He paused, halting for a word, and still reddening.

"Ay, ay," said Aros chuckling and blinking, "are you, too, hit? Man, I thought myself the only one in these parts in such a quandary. Ay, here am I, and at sixty years I'm just as I was at your age, Mr. Fraser; for 'tis my all I'd give—little enough—but 'tis my all I'd give to fill the shoes of a man of active life. And yet when it comes to the bit, it's a pipe and a verse of Horace I'm hankering after. Oh, man, if a body could but be one thing fairly!"

Fraser felt uncomfortable so to have stirred the old fellow with a tale that was but a decoy. For in his mind's eye just then there was not a vision of sick men with himself arduous in their service; it held nothing, indeed, but the picture of a girl's face framed in a hood of pink sarcenet, and set against a background of dark yew; so he offered instant solace to a pricking conscience by proposing to set out for the afflicted township without delay.

"Do you so, sir," said Aros. "Do you so . . . . God!" he added regretfully, "but I envy you. Why didna my father make me a leech, I wonder?"

They parted then, and instantly Fraser's anxiety to depart for the plague-spot was supplanted by a desire for surgical attendance on Morag's injured wrist. Therefore it was that he hung about the grounds of the house, awaiting the opportunity of an unobserved approach to the girl, when he might acquit himself of an apology he had been conning half the morning. But after two hours of patient

pacing, he learnt his vigil useless, for the servant informed him that the lady had gone off on pony-back just after her return from her morning walk. A letter of some kind, the serving-man said, had occasioned this hurried departure.

A little later in the day Fraser set off to his appointed task at the stricken clachan. It was now the hour of the mid-day meal in the township, and the cottars, home from their patches of rough ground, came to the doorways to look after him. The arrival of the pestilence was exactly timed to the coming of this stranger ; already the story from Tiree was gone abroad and his identity half-guessed, and, for all his soft voice and winning ways, the old wives now held him for a Jonah.

But he swung on, unheeding their unfriendly looks, and at last reached a group of little houses set near the shore, two miles east of Aros. Here was Tigh-ban, where the sick men lay. The infected folk were chiefly fishers, touching, by reason of their work, at many mainland ports, and in this way carrying fever to their homes. Fraser halted at the first of the huts—a miserable rickle of pebbled walls and turfen roof, and rattled at the osier hurdle that served for door. It was an old man, grizzled and bent, half-doited and half-deaf, who opened to his knocking, and to him the surgeon explained in his scant Gaelic that he was the doctor.

“The doctor ?” whispered old Niall Ban. “The doctor, the doctor ? But ’tis Murdo’s hour ; ’tis his hour, poor Murdo ! ’Tis the good son he was to me ; but there’s been something following him for years.”

He slithered indoors, and Fraser followed. He passed the cow and its follower, which had their home in the forepart of the chamber, and reached the untidy bed of the patient. The peat-smoke from the fire set midmost of this part of the room obscured all things, but the light from the small window and the chimney-opening was enough to show the nature of the illness at a glance. The open eyes steadily fixed in unconsciousness, the fingers plucking at the counterpane, the dusky mottling of the skin seen on the bared and twitching forearm : here was an ancient foe as common as it was deadly, known to him of old in Sicilian lazarettos, and in not a few of His Britannic Majesty's frigates over half the world. It was jail-fever, the grisliest of the dragons his profession had to fight ; and not without reason had the Sunivaig MacLeans shown heels to this enemy. It needed even some screwing-up of his own courage before he came close enough to do his work. But it was an instant's wavering only. He felt the sick man's pulse, and sat motionless for a little, estimating its strength ; then, producing lint and scalpel, he proceeded to a phlebotomy without more ado.

He found seven men ill in the little clachan. In regard to air and light supply, the houses were as hopeless as any hospital on the orlop-deck. Hopeless, too, in the matter of attendance, for three cottages with a patient in each had but one woman for nurse amongst them all ; in other four cases, it was father or son who waited on father or son, and all without heart or spirit. The rest of the little community had vanished ; it was said that

they had gone to the sheilings of last summer to await the passing of the plague.

"It's away they are," whispered old Niall Ban. "They left Murdo. It's running they went. But their hour is following them."

His head splitting with an ache the foul air of the dwellings intensified, Fraser stole out from the group of huts. He would seek a fresh breeze on the ben above Callachly, he thought, before returning to Aros, and accordingly he struck across the bog to the hill-foot. As he ascended the heathery slope he looked back on the sweep of the grey Sound on whose waves the declining sun sent broad shafts of light from a watery-looking sky. In the little patches of fields there was none at work ; no shepherd's whistle on the hill ; no drovers with their ruddy cattle dotting the roads ; not a man at the spade, nor a woman at the creel in the peat-cutting ; only in the village-street an occasional figure, solitary, strange. And but two days ago what a hive by contrast ! All was eloquent of the terror of the plague.

Glowing with his exertions, and consciously taking deep draughts of the clean air, he was mounting still higher, when his eye caught sight of something moving down the hollow of the great glen that ran south from Callachly. The townships—Kilbeg, Rhoadail and Gaodhail—smoked faintly from the grassy hollows where they lay hid in the floor of the glen, giving a sense of companionship in this trough among hills lonely and awesome. Indeed, but for these spirals of thin reek, he would have felt some concern at the thought of a journey in

"Muriel, I think, you said?"

"Muriel, yes," he answered, charmed for the moment from his present cares, for in fancy he heard the childish voice at a ballad.

Morag smiled in reply to his brightening countenance.

"How old is the little sister now?"

"Why—eleven—no—twelve. Muriel . . . . . Muriel . . . ." He doated on the memories the name recalled. "'Tis two years since I saw her."

"Two years—a long time. But you will soon see her?"

He gave a quick glance at the fair face that seemed so ingenuous. "Ah, yes," he said; "soon. But first there is this plague to be quit of."

"Yet Doctor MacNab comes and the little sister waits. Fie, fie, what a lazy brother!" Where were her tears now? She laughed with a merriment that he told himself was divine.

"I fear the little sister would scarce approve if I left these poor sick folks because another comes to help in their healing," said he.

"Then you do not go even when Doctor MacNab comes?" she queried, suddenly halting, and there was something harsh and metallic in her voice.

He turned to find her changed again, the laughter had gone from her lips, and her eyes were once more a mingled dew and fire. And yet, even then, amidst all her bewilderment, one thought and one thought only was sweeping in on his heart and brain in fuller and fuller tides, possessing him wholly: a secret terror—a secret gladness—it

caused him to shun her gaze. She saw his glance quaver and fail, and forthwith misinterpreted.

"I knew, I knew," she cried, and flung an arm aloft, as if to denounce him for the spy she thought him. "'Tis not the plague alone that holds you here; 'tis not alone your charity that binds you to the Isle?"

This was again a different Morag—different, indeed, from her of the moonlit heath of twenty hours ago. What had happened to poison so her every thought of him? asked Fraser of himself. There she stood, and on her features so fair, so tragic, loathing mingled with the triumph of her discovery.

"It is not these alone?" she repeated, pale and breathlessly eager.

"Not these alone, madam," he said simply. "There is another bond, but it is not what you deem. I am no spy—Must I repeat it?—I am no spy."

Impatient in her unbelief, she stamped her foot.

"Is the bond that holds you aught that will bear the light of day?" she said.

Even as they were uttered he forgave the words. All his being cried out to him to enfold her in his arms and hush this shrill wrath in the murmur of protesting love. "So dear, so dear," he told himself. "So dear, so dear." And yet he held his peace. But the longing he suppressed from speech stole to his eyes at last, and as he raised them, calm and reverent to her face, she read the message he had not spoken and quailed before its intensity of appeal.

It was just at that moment that a noise of padding



hoofs fell on their ears, and a little man wearing goggles and a broad-brimmed beaver, and mounted on such another shaggy pony as Morag's, appeared round the end of a grassy mound. On his saddle in front of him he carried a wig with bob-curls, but at sight of the lady this was hastily donned, and, dismounting, he bowed as if in a minuet.

"Dear Doctor MacNab," cried Morag briskly, another change of manner appalling Fraser by its swift appearance, "and but newly from the Ross? We are much beholden to you for your haste, sir. What with broken bones and deadly plagues, are we not in a sad way, Mr. Fraser?" She indicated her companion's arm in the sling. "Mr. Fraser, a surgeon of the Navy. Doctor MacNab of Aros Isle." There was an attempt at gaiety in her tone, but she was none the less distraught as she turned aside to an outcropping rock and mounted her garron.

The old surgeon bowed to the introduction, his whimsical little red nose in the air, whilst he turned droll eyes on Morag, saying:

"And it's myself I should be healing, physician as I am. Never a visit to Aros House, but a new wound, madam." He put a hand to his breast and sighed. "Plague? A broken arm? What are these to a fractured heart, Mr. Fraser?"

Morag's laughter in reply was a trifle strained, and she showed a hint of red in either cheek as she went ahead of the men, and left them to follow discussing the pestilence.

In the midst of a harangue on the fever, the old surgeon broke off all at once. "What was it?"

he said suddenly. "Now I remember ! . . . Miss Morag !" he called.

She waited till they came up.

"Oh, I but wanted to say that had I not known your brother was in Paris, I could have sworn it was he who passed me at Rhoail there, not an hour gone. A remarkable likeness, madam. Now who can it be ?"

Morag's cheeks were now chalky-white again : but she was so far herself as to give a warning glance in Fraser's direction, and the old babbler held his peace instantly.

"Who, indeed, could it be ?" she said. "Norman, as you know, cannot leave Paris with safety. . . . But I keep you from your plague and its humours, I fear. I see Mr. Fraser still eager to discuss his treatment." And so she rode on, leaving Fraser more thoughtful than ever.

Dr. MacNab returned to the point at which he had broken off—a matter of a rabbit-soup. To the old fellow the rabbit was anathema.

"A little nosing brat of a beast living in the bowels of the earth, sir ! Phew ! And indeed, Mr. Fraser, a possible cause of the pest, sir ; yes, sir !"

Regarding the need for a continuance of Fraser's attendance on the sick men the old surgeon was equally emphatic.

"Miss Morag questions the necessity of this," said Fraser.

"Then Miss Morag is kindlier in her thoughts of my ability than I am myself. You must stay, Mr. Fraser, till we finish one way or another. You

—Bruce or Pickle himself—who would gladly forestall him of his prey and its price ; so, smiling and singing, he came through morning mists on Torlochan Hill, and thence through Glenaros wood to Glenaros shore. He took post finally on a rocky point over against which the ruin of the older Castle Aros could be faintly glimpsed through the curtains of fog as a ghostly tower suspended in mid-air. In the shallow waters inshore where Aros River chased the outgoing tide, a shadowy schooner swung at anchor, and when the mist had cleared from the coast, she showed as a peaceful-looking bark with a hull of black and salmon-colour.

But if the fog-bank thinned landwards, it was a different story on the Sound. Dense and belted, the white vapours lay motionless in the curve of the Kyle, and it seemed plain that it was this impenetrable pall that had sent the vessel inshore for safety.

No sign of life was to be seen on her. But it was not the first adventure of the kind in which the youth on the beach had taken part, and he deemed a close approach inadvisable. He could wait. His eye caught a patch of grass encircled by the black rocks, and he smiled approval of its proximity as if this had been his due, as if it had been spread by some elfin valet for him and him alone. Still humming an old-time air—it was “MacIntosh’s Lament,” but he hummed it happily, no import of its profounds of sadness seeming to touch him—he tossed his dark cloak over the green spot, stretched himself prone and lay *perdu*, raising his head now and again for a glance at the schooner.

But after a little he tired of his task, and, finally, for lack of better sport took to tossing from hand to hand some trinkets from the pockets of his skirted coat ; for all his pale cheek and clever eye, a child amid his toys.

Among the mass of rings and pendants and snuff-boxes with portraits on their lids, were a few tiny miniatures ; and latterly he discarded all the trumpery except these ivories, which he rattled like dice, or shuffled as they had been cards. There were three in all, and all were representations of women's faces—delicate ethereal limnings, where the tints of the cheeks and the eyelashes' faint shadows seemed those of life itself, or rather of some distant fairy life, silent, smiling, and a-dream. The simper no longer dwelt on his lips, however, for although he still soothed the old lament softly, something of the dark and ancient lore of his race returned to his memory, as he beheld the persistent luck with which one of the miniatures ever turned uppermost. It held a woman's portrait, a face encircled with dark hair, a face, *mignonne*, alert, lips pouting, the wide eyes watchful.

"'Toinette," he said, addressing it—"ah, 'Toinette, if only you were here to share the honours of the game. But could I trust you, Tony ? Would you play fair, my dear ?"

He ceased for an instant in order to gaze quizzingly at the schooner ; anon he toyed with the miniatures again, and deigned a glance at the other faces.

"The far too sensible Marguerite !" he said.  
"And Marie ! Marie—my little saint of the forests

of Angers ! Ah, Marie ! all too good for poor Norman ! What a world ! what a world ! ”

He laughed softly and kicked light heels in air.

“ And ’Toinette—the false ’Toinette ? To think that of all three it is only she who comes back to me in midnight dreams. There’s the irony—there’s the smart, Norman, my dear.”

A faint sound of voices, a foot knocking on the stones of the beach, roused him from his reverie, and he swept a handful of trinkets into either pocket of his coat, and lay still as the rocks around, for he saw two men approaching the very point where he lay.

“ Drumfin,” he chuckled—“ Drumfin—on his guard against the schooner. What luck, Norman ! ”

He scanned the other and recognised him also.

“ Pennyfuaran returned ? ” he said. “ Bravo, Morag ! It seems your singed moth does not dread the fire.”

The exile and his companion were almost over the youth before he stirred and looked up smiling. Drumfin frowned at sight of the pale sinister face gazing up from amid the rock and seaweed, like some gnome from the earth’s depths pushing out to the glad day. His hand was even on his hanger, when Pennyfuaran signed to him to desist, and hailed the apparition.

“ Why, if it be not Norman himself ! ” he cried.

“ And who is here but Pennyfuaran,” said Norman smiling again. He did not rise.

Drumfin’s face cleared in part, but his brows

were still a trifle drawn, as he gazed down on the delicate, mobile face, while Pennyfuaran spoke a word of introduction.

"You will pardon me if I do not rise, gentlemen," said Norman. "Indeed, you were well advised if you also seated yourselves here, so will you be less easily observed from the ship. I take it your errand is the same as mine, sir," he went on, addressing Drumfin. "You watch her movements?"

"Why, yes," said the exile, sighing. "There's little else to do."

Pennyfuaran seated himself, but Drumfin still remained standing, an abstracted eye on Norman.

"I must have known you as a boy," he said at last. "But it is some other set of recollections that your face now stirs. Why, yes . . . at Avignon . . . Was there not a lady . . . ?"

"The Prince's friend?" queried Norman.

"Why, yes . . . but—"

"Could it be de Talmond now?" hesitated the youth, a wary eye on the other.

Drumfin caught the look and grew suddenly wroth. It was plain he suspected this young man of an attempt to mislead.

"No," he broke out passionately, and there and then the mere sign of his anger seemed an incongruity with the man himself. Was it the memory of his Prince's follies that stirred him so strangely, or something in the smiling countenance of the youth at his feet? "No," he said. "Not Talmond, sir, nor Montbazon, nor Guéméné. 'Twas la Baronne—la Baronne—?"

"De Bas-Ondulé," said Norman, his face a trifle haggard now.

"Why, yes, sir, the same."

"The cat! Have not I heard of her? But why should features so commonplace as mine recall hers so beautiful? I never beheld the lady, and, traitress to my Prince as she proved, had never a desire to see her."

"No?" said Drumfin. "And you never saw her? 'Tis strange your face recalls hers then, for since her fall ten years ago, I have never spared her a thought."

"Strange, indeed," said Norman—"woundily strange! Yet though I was in Avignon at the season of her discovery, I knew nothing of her. I jalouse that it would be my face brought the time and place to mind, and so her ladyship of fond remembrance?"

"It may be," said the exile.

"I trust the accident is not prejudicial to your good opinion of the son of my father, sir? Drumfin and Aros were aye friends and on the right side."

The old Jacobite bowed again.

"And indeed," went on Norman, "though it's myself that's saying it, still and on its truly nothing but mixing black and white to name that woman and myself in a breath, for my instincts are as loyal as my father's; and, young as I am—though it's myself that's speaking—I have done work for the cause." His voice lowered as in modesty while he concluded. "Indeed, sir, to tell you frankly, and in despite of Pennyfuaran's presence, I have Clancarty's confidence in the immediate business in hand."

Drumfin winced as if in pain.

"And," went on Norman, noting the start, "it's for no other reason I'm watching the schooner here. I trust, sir, this new-comer bodes no evil to us."

The old man shook his head. "I cannot tell," he answered. Yet he did not turn to look at this ship that threatened danger, for it seemed even as if he saw the greater peril close at hand, and he kept his steady eye on the youth couched on the rock at his feet.

"She shows no bustle anyway," said Pennyfuaran. "'Tis the fog-bank on the Sound has sent her in, I suppose."

"Agreed," said Norman. "A sailor's terror this same fog. And yet it is nought to what I saw in Tiree but the other day—a mist of weeks, and thick enough for a knife to cut."

"In Tiree?" said Pennyfuaran. "Were you there? Then you'd know of cousin Angus and his trouble?"

"Why, yes," answered Norman. "You have it already, it seems. But, of course, I had forgotten," he said, addressing Drumfin. "You were there at the time, sir, did I not hear?"

"Not quite," said Drumfin. "I happened to be away the day the man was stabbed."

"Poor Chisholm!" said Norman. "A decent body! Misguided though—misguided!"

"'Twas a Mr. Fraser who told us of it," said Pennyfuaran.

"Fraser!" cried Norman in affected surprise. "The trusty?"

"A spy, you mean? No," said the chieftain.



"He is a surgeon from a ship of the King's Navy."

"The same—the same ! Spy and surgeon, both ! It was he who pushed on poor Angus in a quarrel personal—the hound !—so that he might rid himself of a rival in his traitor's trade, for Chisholm was also a trusty, it seems."

"Spy ?" said Pennyfuaran. "Fraser ?"

Norman chuckled. "Spy and surgeon," he said. "He has a travelling wardrobe, has Fraser. But tell me this, Pennyfuaran : Is he in the Isle, this Fraser ? For if he is, good-bye from me to Aros, let me tell you."

Pennyfuaran's cheeks flushed, and a hint of moisture came to his eyes. "He's still in Aros," he said quietly, as if restraining himself, "and in your father's house, Norman. He has a broken arm, you must know ; and then he has some plague-stricken folk in hand. It's these that keep him waiting on, I believe."

"Cousin," said Norman gravely. "I am glad you've told me this. For neither you with your half-and-half ways, nor I, nor any white cockade, is safe with him here. That schooner, believe me, is less dangerous, were she as full of Hanoverians as the horse of wood outside the walls of Troy was of Greeks. Man, he'll stop at nothing, will Fraser."

Excited by the harangue, Pennyfuaran got to his feet, and Norman rising with him, stooped to take up his cloak. As he raised the heavy mantle, something fell from its folds, tinkled on the rocks, and then lay on a little pad of bladder-wrack, looking up appealingly at all of them—a miniature

of a lady with dark hair unpowdered, with pouting lips, with steady, watchful eyes.

Drumfin gazed at it fixedly, while Norman, pale and dry-lipped, picked it up. For a moment he looked at it critically, head to one side, and then with a little forced laugh and a bright eye, handed it to the old Jacobite.

"A fair face—something magical in its attractiveness, I opine. I found it in an old curiosity shop of the Latin Quarter in Paris, I remember. I wondered then if it could be from life—I wonder yet. But from any view, a fair face and something magical in it, I say."

It was a keen eye the old man turned on the speaker, but the youth did not redden: the actor in Norman had the upper hand now, and it was a strong hand. Not merely fear of discovery held him true to his art: it was vanity also of his proficiency therein, and delight in the encounter, unsought as it had been. He was quite collected, and, despite his desperate pass, an old-time air was humming all the while through his clear shallow brain—the lament he had trolled in the morning as he came over Torlochan.

"A fair face and something magical," said Drumfin contemplatively, turning the miniature this way and that; "yet it were best never to have seen it in the flesh. Wondrous and beautiful, and yet she flung wide and far the ashes of death. It is the Baronne de Bas-Ondulé, Mr. Norman, whom you say you have never seen."

His eyes were piercing now, but the youth was still smiling bravely back to them, when suddenly

Pennyfuaran, to whom all this was a trifle bewildering, broke in :

"Leave Bas-Ondulé for a moment, gentlemen, and look at the Witches' Bay, I beg of you. Yonder is your horse of Troy, Norman."

Down the side of the black and salmon-coloured hull, little figures in red and white were slowly dropping into boats—the Hanoverian soldiery ; and instantly the three men on the rocks ran for the shelter of Glenaros woods. Once they were under the cover of the trees Drumfin spoke to the others.

"Get back to Aros with all speed," he said. "I go north."

They parted in the wet thicket straightway, and the young men left him standing deep in thought, as they crashed through the undergrowth and disappeared. Then, once Norman McLean was out of sight, the exile bestirred himself : yet it was not to the north he set his face. He turned southwards from Aros, and, passing it far to the west, journeyed by the devious ways of the old and half-forgotten tracks that led to Moy, twenty miles away.

Norman and Pennyfuaran, intent on their own safety, beheld nothing of all this change of front, and pushing clear at last of the birches and dwarf oaks on the lower slopes of the hill, laid themselves, prone and panting, on the wet heather, and looked down through the soft rain on Aros.

"See," said Norman. "Yonder they go, the Sidier Roy, thick as swarming bees. Lord, it's your King's men have the best of it, Kenneth MacKinnon. A roof over one's head most nights in the year is aye something."

"Roof or no roof," said the chieftain, "it's me would be glad to change places with you, cousin. Since I met you to-day, I've done naught but groan at my own lot and envy yours."

The other glanced sharply at him.

"Is it Morag?" he said.

"As usual, Norman, you've guessed the bigger half of the trouble. It is Morag, and it's—we'll say—my blood and name as well. . . . Oh, King's man? Me?"

"Ay, you're only half-Hanover, Kenneth, I can see that. But what puzzles me is, that whole-hearted Hanover seems a likelier winner of the race, if all reports be true?"

"You mean just what, Norman?"

"I mean Fraser, cousin. Oh, I ken, I ken! for I hear tales as good as a news-letter. I mean Fraser, man: courteous and attentive, he's ever about her, is he not? And you ken it, too, cousin mine."

Pennyfuaran flushed. "It's me has the heavy heart," he said weakly.

"He? A suitor to sister of mine?" cried Norman in a white heat of scorn. "Were it not for the highest of all interests at stake, I'd be at him with a knife this very hour, I say. I tell you, Kenneth, he's spy and worse than spy."

"God!" cried Pennyfuaran. "But for his broken arm, I'd challenge him."

"So?" said Norman. "Yet is it fair to leave the girl unwarned? For myself, I've but hinted it to her as yet. The task is delicate, you see: and one fears to hurt the little sister. But all the same

common people departed, and leaving her own party, sought distraction in a word or two with the old clergyman.

Pennyfuaran saw the evasion, and came out of doors alone. The soldiers and the glen lasses were dotting the road to Aros, yet there were a few luckless girls unattended by cavaliers, and these had seated themselves on the broad stairs that mounted the wall surrounding the graveyard and the ruined chapel. They were busy removing shoes and *mogain* preparatory to their return to the wilds of the strath, when they caught sight of the chieftain and scurried off; and he sat down on the steps they had vacated. Aros passed with a kinswoman from Calgary on his arm; but Morag still accompanied the fagged minister, even to the saddling of his garron in the cave that served for stable.

At last the old clerk mounting wearily, rode off, and the girl came back and up the path to where Pennyfuaran sat waiting.

"A penny for your thoughts, cousin Kenneth," she said, with a gaiety assumed.

"They are of you, and it's a King's ransom rather than a penny's their price," said he.

She laughed and tried to fathom him at a glance. Had he forgiven her already that he spoke so lightly? Were bygones to be bygones, despite his face so grim?

"They are of you and of the first day I saw you. 'Twas in this very place, cousin," he continued.

She shuddered in mockery. "A place of graves?" she said.

"It was one day long ago when I was but a boy.

You were lost from home, and a tired little lass tending an injured lamb was what we found."

"I remember," she cried. "Silver, my collie, brought you in a pack, and I was fearful of the dog lest he should be jealous of the lambkin."

The chieftain's brow cleared, and he laughed boyishly. "Let us go into the chapel, cousin, and picture it again," he said.

They mounted the steps to the wall-top and, descending the interior flight, passed through the cemetery, and came within the ancient chapel. Morag looked round at the lichens on the great stones, madder and orange and crotal-grey; at the grasses topping the outline of the ruin, their thin spears and pennons clear-cut against the sky.

"Years and years, and it does not change," she said. "Here is the broken cross where you found the lamb and me, and both asleep."

In front of the eastern wall was the upright shaft of a Celtic cross, the terminals gone, and on its westward face, a rude figure of the Mother and Child.

"And the Holy Ones were watching over you," said Pennyfuaran softly. "May they ever watch, Morag."

His tone startled her; she found his eye hard and earnest on her again.

"What do you mean? You are strange to-day, Pennyfuaran. Is there danger?"

He turned abruptly from her and paced nervously over the slaty tombstones that floored the place; his face was twitching.

"What do you mean?" she asked again.

taper, because I thought more of my father's lands than of the House of Stuart; because I thought forfeiture a worse evil than George the Second for King? I say it plainly, I say it again—this man has bewitched you—spy as he is, and worse than murderer.”

“And that's a lie, Pennyfuaran,” she answered, mounting the steps and halting to look down on him.

“It's the white truth,” he cried angrily. “And but for the Sidier Roy so close, your brother himself would be here to prove it.”

“A lie,” she muttered with pale lips, and would have fallen, but he ran up the flight and helped her in safety to the ground.

Fainting though she was, his passion was such that he could not restrain himself. “The truth, I say, Morag, and it was Norman himself sent me to tell it you.”

She made never a word of reply, and after a space the two-mile walk back to Aros was resumed moodily and in silence. Passing Tigh-ban, they looked across the fields to the cottages where the plague still held, and saw the distant figure of a tall man with a slung arm, who appeared on the sky-line and waved a hand to them. Pennyfuaran smiled grimly, as he walked on without any signal of response, but Morag paused for a moment to look at the form outlined against the heavy clouds ribbed grey on grey.

“It cannot be,” she said with a fall in her voice. “Yet Norman——?”

The moorland stretched seawards, so cold and cheerless and shadowed in the evening light that

all perspective seemed lost. It was even as if all the waste and silent places of the earth had suddenly interposed, evoking the darkness to aid in the separation of these two. The stillness weighed on the girl's heart like lead, and she moved on, unreplying to the gesture of the dim figure on the dark ridges above Tigh-ban.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE POSTSCRIPT

ONE evening a fortnight later there were acrid fumes and strange odours around the plague-spot, for it was the night of the fever's quittance, and the surgeons were busy with a disinfection as the Navy understood it. A bucket of Archangel tar had been carried from hut to hut, and red-hot irons having been thrust into this, vapours were produced that well-nigh made short work of the little strength the survivors retained. Yet the resultant coughing and sneezing made no impress on the professional conscience of Dr. McNab, for he declined desisting until a second fiery ordeal had been performed by means of a light applied to some gunpowder steeped in vinegar. Happily these smoky torments were short-lived, and at last the assiduous medicine-men rested from their labours.

Ever since the fever's outbreak the surgeons had quarantined themselves, sleeping of nights in a little hut of turf set on a strip of pasture-land between Tigh-ban and the sea ; and now, as darkness fell, Fraser lay awake on the low bank of bracken-covered sods which served for bed, listening to the deep breathing of his companion, and summoning up again and again memories of his lady. Something that alienated was between them, he felt ; for even if the fever's presence held them apart, yet the

remembrance of several unreturned salutes was bitter yet. What could be amiss ?

Through breaks in the rude wall chill airs blew, and a splutter of rain came frequent, while mysterious drippings in the dark told of leaks innumerable. Cold comfort it was to think of his task finished, if his absence from Aros House had cost him an estrangement so momentous. He tossed uneasily, and envied the sound sleep of the old man on the turfen bank opposite ; even the rattle of the hail-stones that succeeded the soft smirring rain did not disturb this ancient's slumbers.

A slit in the angle of the hut caught his eye. Elusive and faint was the light that showed there ; he fancied it a belated glimmer of the sunset reflected from the wave-crests of the Sound, as the north wind sent them shorewards to end in the swish and trample of the surf. And now he could think of one thing and one thing only—that magic blush of Morag's half-turned face, when she heard he was to stay on in Aros. Ah, Morag, Morag, what were the thoughts that had issues so lovely ? As he dreamed, there came a sudden illumination of the whole field of the army of billows, and lightning ripped the sky jaggedly from horizon to zenith. Afar faint thunder crackled and purred. The wind rose, and soon again came the onpour of hail and sleet, incessant, fierce. Shivering in the searching currents that detached themselves from the whinnying blast outside, he lay listening for the next onset of storm, then sprang suddenly from his couch and ran to the few boards that served to bar the entry to the hut. His left hand was on his hanger, for

above the rumour of the coming tempest he heard the sound of running feet. He pushed the door wide open and aside, and peered out ; and the next instant another lightning-flash split the heavens and revealed to him across the slant of the hail Charlie Ruapais, the Aros serving-man. The little wizened-faced fellow was out of breath.

"Oh, sir, sir," he cried, "that ever I should come near this pest—that ever I should see the day ; but 'tis a message from Miss Morag." He fumbled in his breast. "Shield me, God !" he cried. "Have I lost it ?"

"Here, quick—into the hut," said Fraser.

"But—the plague, sir——" cried Charlie.

"In, man, in," said the surgeon.

Doctor MacNab roused slowly to the sparking of flint and steel inside the little room, and was soon kneeling with the others around the horn-lamp set on the floor of pine-needles. The Ruapais discovered the packet just as the lanthorn was lit. There was a map of Aros Isle by Blaeu of Amsterdam, and a triangle of paper containing a few hastily-scribbled lines, signed with Morag's initials.

*"Will you pardon Haste to be Forward in writing you," it ran ; "but I have it from a Sure Hand that the Sunivaig MacLeans mean to revisit Aros this Night, and if you are to be Safe you must instantly take to the Hill. What a Countryside it is ! Charlie is only free to Guide you clear of our Lands, for he must return to go with me on my Journey to Moy to-morrow. My Father sends me there because of the State of the Isle, so disturbed is it not only by Sunivaig*

*men, but by the Military. You will heed my warning, will you not? I trust your arm is better. How Fortunate your work with the Plague is over. Farewell.*

*"M.M.*

*"P.S.—I shall be at Craig about Noon. But you must not Think of joining us there unless you can do so safely."*

Fraser flushed as he read the last words, and he went slowly over them again.

"In the name of Heaven," broke in MacNab, "how do these Tíree folk learn so expeditiously of everything? The fever on its last day, and already they are here!"

"Oh, sir, sir, will it please you to come?" gabbled Charlie, moving uneasily in his sodden clothes, and blinking into either face appealingly.

Fraser scanned the postscript anew, then placed the map and the note in his breast, picked up his sea-cloak, and extended his hand to MacNab.

"Good-bye," said the old surgeon in reply, "and for your aid many thanks, sir. And, man, get you off those splints in a week, if you wouldna have your arm as stiff as a *cromag*."

His counsel was still in the air, when the young man departed into sleet and darkness.

"Hill or river, sir?" asked Charlie of Fraser.

"Hill. And at the trot. We want to be well away before the next flash."

Fully a mile of bog and thicket had to be traversed before rising ground was won. But the thunder-storm had passed far to the south now; the infrequent lightnings were but flickerings, and as they left the level the hail ceased, a soft rain blurred all

On the other side of the valley was a wilderness of mountains upheaved jaggedly in masses of mauve and sable; and surely by contrast there was something restful in the blue coils of smoke here and there above the dark dots of little houses in the scraggy fields by the riverside. His heart leapt, for one of these little dots was Craig, his trysting-place with Morag at noon.

Coming at last to level ground, he struck the road close by an empty sheep-fank, under whose wall he sat down to rest and consult his map. Craig lay to the east, he saw, a backthrow of a mile or two, and he was still hunting for the mark of Moy on the old print, when a clear sound of singing fell on his ear. Then, on the road and past the angle of the fank-wall, came heavily a great hill-cow with shaggy rust-coloured hide, and behind it keeping time to the *canntaireachd* she lilted, danced a slim Highland lass of sixteen or so. A leaf-tipped hazel-wand whisked her charge this side and that while she swung gracefully across the path and over again as in the start of the reel. But a movement of Fraser's made known his presence, and at the consciousness of a spectator she stopped suddenly, wide-eyed and blushing to the braid between forehead and hair.

The man resting by the wall looked on her smilingly and did not move, but before he could speak, she had dashed like a fawn past her great beast, and was over the rise of the road and out of sight. The cow turned a mild eye of enquiry on the intruder, and then resumed its dull padding onwards. Looking down at his garb, Fraser quizzed himself as to his

appearance. He had taken off his cloak, it is true, yet there was nothing alarming in the apparel its removal disclosed. Hose a trifle muddy, rims of rust on coat-buttons and shoe-buckles, a rude string of canvas attaching his tricorne to his coat-collar, his linen travel-stained, and the rest of his costume in keeping with these enormities—he enumerated all, and smiling grimly, hastened to add to these the offence of two days' lack of shaving. But in any case one thing was sure—he had a tryst at Craig at noon, and, however *deshabillé* he might be, he would keep it. To one so uplifted the vagaries of this shy little herd-lass were nothing, and so he unconcernedly took the track again. Over the rise of the road he saw a cot half a mile away, and leaving this, still in full flight, was the Highland maid. A woman came to the entry of the hut, and, her hand shading her eyes, she looked hard and long at him, then entered and closed the door.

Whether it was hunger or curiosity that impelled, Fraser could not have told, but he made straight-way for the little dwelling, and knocked. Thrice he rapped, and then peering into the rude window, saw something move in the interior's gloom. To further knocking, however, there was no response, and he resumed the highway. Another half mile off lay two huts close together beside a burn that clattered to meet the river, and he saw that peat-stacks hid the doorways as he approached, so that he could not make out if they kept open house for him or not. But a reduplicated sound of drawn bolts told a plain tale ; on rounding the peats, closed doors again met his eye. And the only answer to

the appeal of his knuckles was a sound of many whisperings within.

"A most hospitable side of the country," he said as he turned away. "Give me Tigh-ban itself, if it comes to an exile here."

Craig, he assured himself, could not be far off now, and, with Morag awaiting him, he would soon have a better greeting than this of the sneaked gate. The map gave the house as south of the river, and from another rise in the road he saw the heaped winter fuel that betokened cottages near. The bent-thatched huts lying close to the stream did not take the eye readily, but at last he made them out, three or four in all, the little buildings of rude stone, grey and unmortared, leaning in shauchly fashion against each other.

But when he crossed to them over the stream of the Goladoir by means of the usual stepping-stones, he came again to shut doors, and shut they kept, too, despite his knocking. Then a dog howled in one of the huts, and instantly from the others there came a chorus of barkings.irate, Fraser consulted his map afresh, and finding this was Craig and none other, he hammered incontinently at the door nearest him. At the last he called all his poor Gaelic to command, and cried out in it to the inmates, and a man's voice replied in English from the interior of the cottage :

"Who are you ? What do you want ? Where are you from ?" asked the voice.

"I am a friend of MacLean of Aros."

"Are you a pedlar ?"

"No."

“What do you wish?”

“Direction to the party of Miss MacLean of Aros. She was to have come this way before noon to-day.”

“We know nothing of her party. . . . You are no pedlar?”

“No, I tell you.”

“Where are you from?”

“Aros, by Glenforsa.”

The door opened and a young man came out, scratching a head covered with fair curls, fine and tiny. He eyed Fraser dubiously. His cheek had never felt steel, and the same fine crisp hair covered it; he was muscular withal.

“Have you seen a pedlar carrying a red box?” he asked.

“No pedlar have I seen, and none do I wish to see,” said Fraser testily. “What ails you at the pedlars? My business is with none of them, but with Miss MacLean, whom I was to have met here in order to a further journey to Moy.”

“Then will it please you to come in, sir,” said the man, still glunching and glooming. “We see few strangers this gate, and we’ll aye need to be careful.”

The traveller followed him into one of the huts, and in the dark of the interior, a group of folk pushed behind the door by which he entered, and, whispering noisily in Gaelic, took refuge in another apartment that reeked of cattle. It was a bare earthen-floored kitchen he entered, a bed in one corner, a fire in another, with an attempt at a clay chimney projecting over the peats; while in a third corner was a great rude table with bannocks and bowls of broth on three sides of it. Fraser had



evidently interrupted a meal, and he began with apologies, which were quickly silenced by protestations of equal civility from a sonsy young woman of great physical beauty, the red and brown of her cheeks being health itself. In several journeys she carried the rough fare ben the house, then laid a fresh white cloth; and whereas the meal had hitherto been brose and bannocks, she now made him a dish of tea.

"Miss Morag's friends are ever ours, sir," said she. "And if it's your will, I'll give you tea—dear as it is—thick enough for the spoon to stand on end in. Your arm will be hurt, sir," she added after a pause.

"Nothing of moment," said the surgeon, making acquaintance eagerly with some broiled troutling that accompanied the brew.

The woman proved to be the wife of Alasdair Ban, the youth who had opened the door to him, and since it was now half an hour after noon, the traveller began to question her about the road to Moy, and the probable cause of Morag's delay. No person had come from the Inshriff, or east side of the glen, but in the early morning twenty or more of the MacAllisters, a gipsy tribe, had passed from the west side—from the Ross probably—the men, women and children on foot, their tents on two led asses. To this story of his wife Alasdair Ban added the information that the gipsies had brought word of a death from plague on Lochlay-side; and such a horror was in the man's look and tone as he spoke that Fraser judged it well to say nothing of the sickness in Aros.

"Would it not be the wise thing for me to go on to Inshriff, and ask for Miss Morag there?" said Fraser at last.

"You might well be doing that same," said Alasdair.

"Will you guide me there?"

"'Tis the straight road without a guide, sir."

"But, man, I'll pay."

"Pay, or no," said the man slowly and looking meaningly at his wife. "Pay or no, I maun wait here the day."

"It's the rude folk you'll be thinking us, sir," broke in the handsome wife, her red cheeks flaming redder, "but, you see, there are only old men and weans here beside himself—and there's the pedlar coming."

"Oh, damn the pedlar!" said Fraser. "What has he to do with it?"

There fell a silence. The Highlander poked the peats vigorously, and his wife, her back to the traveller, busied herself with some dishes. Then Alasdair turned, the cleek in his hand, and said:

"It's this way, sir; it's what I am going to say is this. Here was this Irish pedlar at Lochlay-side—he and his brother—when a woman died of the pest. It was he and his brother coffined her; it was he and his brother buried her. Paid and well-paid, too—oh, yes, it was well-paid they were. But it has gone abroad that they are full of the pest themselves. Before the story got about, the younger went off in a smack to the mainland, and by all accounts he's clear. But by the word we have of the other, he's making for Torosay. Nor bite

nor sup did he get in the Ross, and so he has been driven far on the road this way. It's a God's pity for the man, but he's bringing seven deaths in his hand, and under my roof he'll not come. It's a God's pity ! And still and on I'll stay here till he pass, if he be not dead ere this."

Fraser looked wonderingly at the man as he stood there, the peat-cleek grasped nervously in his hand, his whole frame shaking with the passion of his fear.

"Yonder is a cogie of milk, yonder are bannocks," cried the Highlander. "As he comes by, he'll see us leave them for him by the roadside. Aught else he may whistle for."

The man's panic had caught his wife, and over her task of rinsing dishes, she was sobbing gently with averted face. The ragged mob of bairns and ancients ben the house were mumbling and hustling against the door, their terror at the high words manifest in the confused noises they made.

Fraser pondered his next move. It was a clear hour past noon, and Morag had not yet come. He decided to go on to Inshriff, and accordingly took farewell of the cottar and his wife. As he departed he heard the old folk and the children flocking back from the cold outer room to the warmth of the kitchen peats. Already the sun was low, the air chilly, and he stamped numb toes on the hard of the road, his huge shadow on the heather making giant antics as he did so.

The glen now wound north, and the great walls of hills came crowding closer on the track which grew rapidly steeper, but at the end of this ascent the heights fell away again on either side, and quite

a broad valley came into view. To the south a chain of lakes ran, interlacing with mountain-spurs, like the spaces between half-plaited fingers. Close by the roadside was a little grey tumble of buildings set on a flat of vivid green : Inshriff for a surety.

A rocky track went down to the sweep of field around the farm, then came a cobbled court, with a barn and stable facing each other, the back of the dwelling-house forming the third side of the square. From the path's direction it was evident that the back entrance to the dwelling was oftener used than the front, and Fraser was soon tirling at the little mean door of white wood. It was twilight now, and the man who answered the knocking held a lit cruisie in his hand. Grey-whiskered, and with the eyes of a ferret, he bowed and fawned and snuffled to Fraser with all the graces of a Frenchman, rubbing his knuckles in the air all the while, until the surgeon sickened to look at him.

"Well, well," he said in answer to Fraser's question, "and it's Miss Morag and her servants you're looking for? No, she's not come this way yet, sir; not yet. Well, well! and you'll be from the Ross, sir? Well, well!"

Fraser answered that he was not from the Ross, but from the east side of the Isle. He spoke sharply, for the fellow's obsequiousness disconcerted him, and he felt the little ferret eyes search all over his person and rest on his splinted arm.

"Well, well! And you are from Aros, sir? Well done, sir! And you came by the Maam?"

Fraser replied that he had come by Glenforsa. The fellow's manner perplexed him; it was servility

itself, yet his questions were those of an equal, and he stood blocking the door without invitation to enter, his politeness expending itself on barren courtesies of tone and bearing. Thinking he would try another issue, the traveller asked suddenly :

“The pedlar, has he passed ?”

“What pedlar, sir ? No pedlar, sir. Is it a packman, sir ?”

Again the mechanical smile, the rubbed hands, and the keen glance, then a slack mouth, and an air of innocent curiosity. The transition was too rapid for good acting, and Fraser’s jaw tightened as he eyed the man.

“I see,” he said drily.

The little eyes shifted and fell ; then an easy facile smile folded itself on the mask of a face once more. Fraser looked at him for a moment without a word further, and turning on his heel, strode off in haste, for even the fingers of his injured limb tingled to beat the treacherous jaws of the fellow. As he reached the roadside he stumbled on a little bowl of milk half-empty and he saw that some crumbs of bread lay scattered on the surrounding grass.

“So,” he said to himself, “the pedlar has passed Craig after all, and without Alasdair Ban setting eye on him. He must have taken a byway there.”

No sooner had the traveller entered the fringe of trees on the crest of the brae than the man in the yard of Inshriff ran across to the stable, and saddling a dun pony rapidly, he led it to the house-door.

“Murdo,” he called.

A voice within returned the hail.

“Here’s the piper to pay,” cried the man with

the ferret eyes. "There's a young bird here with a broken wing, asking for Miss Morag of Aros and I've sent him chasing the cuckoo. Pennyfuaran's at Kinloch, and he should have kent of yon ere this : and here is the night and it's a bonnie road for an old man like me. Canny, lad, till I come again in the morning."

Next moment he was mounted and trotting back by the road the surgeon had come.

Fraser, all unconscious of the excitement he had caused in Inshriff, was industrious with his map, and heard nothing of the splutter the rider made a mile away. From the rude print he saw that Glenforsa debouched on Glenmore about two miles further on, and, stepping out, he soon reached this opening in the northern wall of the valley. It was by this way he had himself passed, through the dark of the preceding night ; it was by this very route Morag should have come. Had something detained her ? Or had she chosen another road for Moy ? But evening was fast advancing ; the pedlar's story was still in his mind—in fact, if the bread-crumbs spoke truly, the poor man could not be far ahead. It was just possible the sick packman had crossed Morag's route in his wanderings, and Fraser pushed on in the hope of overtaking him.

Half an hour later his shoes were sounding on the pebbly bit of road which ran through the hazel-wood of Benadd. It was mirk enough here, but none so black as to prevent him beholding dimly, when half-way through the copse, the figure of a man rising from his hands and knees by the roadside, stumbling on for a step or two, and so to his knees

lent a shadow that made the features of the pedlar more ghastly still, as he read his answer in the other's silence.

"Mother av Hivin! 'Tis a pore counthry will lave a man die on the roadside. 'Twas not so in the ould days when the holy wans were in yon place beyond the Ross."

Fraser looked at the dark west where the dying man's gaze lingered. Behind the glens and the hills, and set in the sea at the end of the road which this poor man had trod, lay the holy place of Scotland. For centuries, and by this very track it might be, the preachers of the cross had come from Iona, and so to wider lands beyond. And this was the fruit of the travail of their souls—this stricken man dying by the wayside at the end of his awful pilgrimage? This—? Was this all?

But his reverie took another flight: a dream of the little sister in London-town came to him, and he saw himself and the child under the trees at Richmond. It was a sunny day and warm and the flecks of light streaming through the sycamores in full leaf, fell golden on Muriel's hair as she danced everywhere on the sward, making chaplets and posies of daisies. And here was this black thing, Life, waiting for her so fragile. Oh, if he could but gather her and all things tender and fair in arms compassionate to shield them from this nightmare of a world! . . . Then, beside the little sister's face came another, aureoled also in hair of gold. Morag! Morag! What of defeat or disaster could the future hold for her that he would not withstand to the uttermost, if she but gave him the right! . . .

Of a sudden, his musing was broken in upon by the croaking voice of the pedlar—

“There’s something still to say—something I forgot, sir. ’Tis these black fits that send me all astray. . . . Look in the box, your honour. . . . It was early yesterday before the faintness came on my spirit that the dark thing happened. Just above Inshriff it was that I saw it—a chase and a fight and a lady cruelly done by.—Water, sir.—Just above Inshriff it was, and me spent and helpless on a rock on the hill. There were six or seven wild fellows crying and shouting, her pony running free, and her maid wailing. And ’twas the devil himself in a long cloak with wings that called them on like so many hounds—a fat beast of a priest he was. And the lady, God love her, the poor creature—But in the box, sir. . . .”

“What else, man, what else?” said Fraser, nipping the wrist savagely, and testing the pulse again.

But the dying man smiled vacantly and silently, and slid down in collapse, and the surgeon saw the end was coming. He sprang to the red box, and opened it by its strap and buckle. On the top of a heap of ribbons and trinkets lay a long fold of grey muslin, and Fraser, with a face as white as the pedlar’s, recognised the tissue of the pelerine with whose breast-knot Morag’s hand had toyed so daintily many a time. He had but marked it for hers, when the man astraddle the bank beside him suddenly gave a quavering heave of the chest. The surgeon glanced quickly at his face and waited, listening. There came a second gasp and a third



and then the pedlar had gone on a longer journey than any he had yet known.

And so Fraser scraped the snow from the turf under the birch and hazel shaw, and made a shallow grave, and built a little cairn.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A MESSAGE FROM FRANCE

SIX miles west of Craig, and thirteen from the grave of the dead pedlar, stood Kinloch Inn on the shore of Loch Scridain, and facing Ben More. As night fell the snow and the winds possessed the little hostelry. No matter if the depths of the glen were quiet, winds there were ever at Kinloch, for the great bulk of the Ben caught every ocean blast and sent it swirling back on this little two-storey building, all narrow gables and high chimneys.

Kinloch was busy at seasons, for the drovers from the Ross made much use of the Inn on their way to Grasspoint Ferry. But to-night there was no stir about the place, no smell of cattle in the air, and where often the whole six windows blazed cheery and heartsome only two were alight. Into the upper room a giant of a landlord came and went, the handsomest of figures had he worn the philabeg, yet handsome enough in trews, his features a trifle heavy, but a good-humoured mouth behind the great beard. He had placed candles on the side-board as an additional grace to a room already well-lit by a roaring log-fire, and by dripping cruises hung on the mantel. Pennyfuaran and Drumfin sat on either hand the great open chimney-place; between them the landlord pushed a little table set with heavy coloured glasses, and then retired at the sound of a knocking below. He reappeared

with a steaming punch-jug and a small envelope of leather.

"'Twill be for you, sir," he said, handing the packet to Drumfin, and the exile unfastened the button, and took out a parchment superscribed :

*"To Mr. Oliver."*

*"With all Haste."*

"Yes, it's for me," he said. "Send the man up."

"'Twas a woman left it, sir, and she's gone."

"Was there not a pedlar with her?"

"No pedlar, sir; but I was to say that he was ill, and would have delivered yesterday, had he but been able."

"Ill, poor devil. Where, I wonder?"

"The woman is gone, sir, and in a great hurry, too. I do not even know her."

"Queer," said Drumfin. "But I wish she had but left the pedlar's direction. Ill, poor devil! . . . You may leave us, MacKay."

"Your pleasure, sir," said the landlord, and slipping a little dish of silver on the cloth, he withdrew.

As the door closed, the exile looked at the letter, and then at Pennyfuaran. "It's Cousin Peggy again," he said.

"It's you are the happy man," sighed the chieftain. "Read on, man, read on. Ne'er fash about a poor trimmer like me."

Drumfin broke the seal, and found a letter in a cipher he knew well. He translated it slowly. As he did so his face hardened, and when he had finished, he sat gazing for long into the red of the fire. But of a sudden his eyes grew moist, and his lean brown

hands went up to his face. It was only for a second, however, and then he was himself again ; yet the sight of an emotion so unusual in his friend, unmanned Pennyfuaran.

"God ! What's wrong, Drumfin ?"

"All," said the other. "Read that—or rather, listen, while I translate. Here it is : '*Destroy all lists and papers. Thurot useless now. Conflans beaten, his ship, the "Soleil Royal," and the "Heros," stranded at Croisic. Seven ships are come in. Ten are flying at sea. C.P.*'"

"What does it mean ?" asked Pennyfuaran.

"A new rising and a new failure. This is the chief of the two fleets that were to have aided, and it is scattered to the four winds."

"As black as that !"

"May it be no blacker before the affair finishes," said the exile. "You will keep secret regarding this, lad. For the note is but ten days old, and it will be another ten days before the news is public."

"You may trust me, sir," said Pennyfuaran fiercely. "King's man or no, you may trust me."

"Delay means the safety of many, you'll understand," said Drumfin, abstractedly taking up the tiny chalice of silver which the landlord had laid beside the punch.

"What's that ?" asked the chieftain.

The dish of metal had a bowl no larger or deeper than the hollowed palm of a man's hand, and from either side of it a little flat handle projected. There was a scroll of oak leaves running around the margin, and when the exile saw this, he bent his head and kissed the cup reverently.

"It's the Lochalsh stirrup-cup," he said. "It seems MacKay has recognised me."

"You tell me?" cried the young man, and springing to his feet in ecstasy, he spilled some punch into the silver and, gasping and coughing, tossed off the draught. "Pity me! The man's no backward for an innkeeper," he went on. "I'll speak him fair about guarding his tongue."

"Pennyfuaran, man, let him be," said Drumfin. "You go the very way to injure him deeply. If he is an innkeeper, still and on he is Highland, and of the right side, else how does he come by this cup? Besides, he is a Lochalsh man, you see. I'm safe, man, safe, and I'd be quiet and resting, if you'd but let me." He turned to his favourite occupation of watching the fire's red heart.

Unheeding the rebuff the young man sat down, and filled himself some punch, calling on the other to join.

"And the Prince quaffed you, you limmer," he said, toying with the cup of silver. "The darling Prince! And what though he fails a hundred times, he's still my darling! . . . A toast, Drumfin! 'The days that are by wi't.'"

The Jacobite replied with a nod only.

"You're scarcely companionable," protested the youth. "Take your glass, man."

"It's the memories I'm having, Pennyfuaran," said the exile. "Let me be, lad, for the little time I'll have in the glens of remembrance. It's sore thinking I am of the old days—the days when everyone but the King's man wore the tartan." He glanced meaningly at the other's dress.

Pennyfuaran reddened, and reached for a fresh supply of punch.

"The kilt and the plaid?" he said, swinging his haunch and looking down at the dress. "And thanks to Mr. Pitt for them. But King's man or no, Drumfin; Charlie's man or no, try me; there's none will do better by your exile than Kenneth MacKinnon of Pennyfuaran. Haud till't, and I'll play you a spring that'll send the black sorrow flying."

He went to the door, and called loudly in Gaelic, and some distant sounds replying, he said:

"Lend me your pipes, MacKay."

"There's a new reed, sir," answered the landlord.

"New reed or no, bring them to me, you sinful man."

MacKay brought the pipes, and the chieftain taking them, swung the bag to his oxters. The room was big, but all too small for the tuning of the drones that followed; blaring and roaring they sounded, a storm for fury and discord. Then at last the melody came, and away went MacKinnon with a swing and a lilt in his step, the streamers of his pipes and the fringe of his plaid sweeping the wood-lined walls, as he turned in the far corner. High and clear and piercing, the air held the big landlord on the stairs, the apple of his throat gulping. High and clear and tremulous now, and still the silent man on the hearth sat gazing into the midmost red of the fire. Lost faiths and passions of old time; the wind in the firs and the roar of many waters; love and death and battle; the march of the clans; the holiness of morning and the tenderness of the afterglow; the salute to the victorious, the lament

for the fallen ; the hopelessness of the exile, and the cry for the far land of home—the land of soft mists and sea-born hills, of the green straths where the deer came in the dawning : it was these the wild magic of the pipes recalled to life in the chambers of imagery. In reverie the man by the fire saw again Lochshiel on the day of his Prince's splendour ; and again he beheld the heights above Glenfinnan alive with the waving tartan. But the vision faded—it flashed and faded ; and high on the pass where the clansmen had thronged, empty now and silent, there rose to the pines and the stars a single note of beauty, despairing yet exultant, mingled of sadness and joy, prophetic of fulfilment, aspiring. Drumfin saw and heard it all ; then the close came in discord and wail, and the player laid the pipes tenderly aside.

"You're a King's man, Pennyfuaran ; and you can do yon ?" said the exile. It was an eye of fire he turned on the youth.

"Be damned to the King," said the other, busy at the punch again. "I'm for Pennyfuaran on either side, and no forfeiture." But he reddened, and added after a pause : "Yet it's well you ken, Drumfin, where my folk would have been in my father's time, if it werena for Duart's arrest. And we'd have made as good Jacobites as some, I wot."

The flush passed from Drumfin's face, and the kindling from his eye, and he turned again to his gazing at the flames of clear orange in mid-fire, murmuring to himself : "Like his father before him, the play-actor aye uppermost."

Young MacKinnon sat moodily silent now, for the emotion bred of his playing had passed, and in the

patch of white on his forehead the red flushings were coming and going, for it was always thus with Pennyfuaran when he had had a spell of the piping and drinking. After a little he retired to a shady corner of the ingle, and screwing his practice chanter together, he tootled and buzzed and squeaked at grace-notes and little runs of airs for a while. There was only the hint of a melody now and again, dismissed as soon as caught, and a new one sought for, and this he would elaborate with an artist's ease, to be forgotten in a moment in the next elusive air he fashioned.

"Is it Moy again for you to-morrow?" he asked Drumfin in a pause of the practice.

"Moy? Yes," said the exile. "Had I foreseen this snow, I'd never have left it."

"I thought as much, I was for Moy myself."

A little gentle smile flickered on Drumfin's tanned features. The chieftain saw it.

"You smile, Drumfin," he said, "and I ken what makes you. You jalouse I was but going there for hints of how the wind would blow from London or Paris. You think I speak truth when I call myself a trimmer?"

Drumfin did not answer.

"You think I keep in touch with you but for the sake of being on the side of the dog that's uppermost, sir? And the damnable thing is that you're right."

"I guessed as much, laddie. And you ken now, without a journey to Moy, which dog is uppermost."

"I ken, I ken, God pity me! . . . And Drumfin, man, you're sorry for me, are you not? Say you're sorry for me, sir."



"Yes, I'm sorry."

"And, by God! it's me that's sorry for myself.  
. . . You'll believe me, Drumfin, when I say that?"

"Yes, I believe you, Kenneth."

The insistent Highlander was somewhat appeased by these admissions, and set to his tootling and squeaking once more, a little film of moisture in his eyes. All his airs were now more melancholy and piercing than ever, and each broke abruptly and was replaced by something yet more poignant and appealing. But in the midst of his practice he suddenly ceased, for there came the sound of a loud and masterful knocking below, and the landlord's voice was heard in converse.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE TACKSMAN

"It's busy we are to-night, Drumfin," said MacKinnon drily, as he rose and went to the door. "Is it bad luck I've brought with my chanter? I trust it's no red-coats, for King's man or no, I'm with you. Have your hanger ready."

Opening the door, he listened at the top of the stair.

"It's Callum from Inshriff, the fox!" he said. "I must see what brings him this gate." And he went downstairs.

Callum it certainly was, rubbing his hands in air, and cringing on the kitchen's sanded floor.

"It's me you'll be wanting, MacQuarie?" said Pennyfuaran.

"Your honour, yes. Will it please you to come outside and look at my horse?"

It was past midnight now, and round all the four walls of the house the Ben More squalls were sweeping. Yet the two men went out into the dark and flurry of the storm, and passing unnoticed the pony at the nose-ring, walked shorewards.

"Well, well, sir," said MacQuarie, halting at last. "You'll be wondering at me bothering you?"

"I make no doubt but you've good cause," said Pennyfuaran, and his tone was that of conciliation—of submission even, for somehow he felt that it was this the man's attitude demanded.

"The fools?" said Pennyfuaran. "The devils, you mean!"

"Well, well, sir, both," said MacQuarie. "But where's the ill wind that blows nobody good? The snow had come by the time Murdo gave me the tale, and so I followed their tracks. . . . You take me, sir? The lady is in danger, and who but Pennyfuaran to the rescue? And it's Callum MacQuarie that kens her prison."

"My Callum!" cried the chieftain delightedly. "The best of rogues!" And he shook the tacksman affectionately one hand on either shoulder. "Now tell me—where?—where?"

"You'll mind Inshriff, Pennyfuaran?"

"Rent-free, yes. And a swatch of Torness for Murdo. . . . Where is she?"

"Well, well, sir, but it's you that's hasty. She's in Cameron Cave."

"That's nothing, then—a night's journey at most."

"And yet, sir, my story is not ended. For here but three hours gone this very night, there comes to Inshriff a man asking for Miss Morag. All the airs of a *duin'-uasal* he had, and a broken arm forby."

"Hell!" said Pennyfuaran. "It's Fraser."

"Well, well, sir! And is Fraser his name? . . . But Miss Morag is safe, sir, where this Fraser will never find her. And the safer, too, that Belle is with her. Belle? Well-named, say I, deaving even Alan with her ongoings. Did I not hear her, as they lay in Cruach Ardura waiting for the dark? Such a tongue, sir!"

"Yes, yes," said the other, "but it's of the man

with the airs of breeding and the broken arm, I'm thinking."

"Fraser, sir, I doubt not. To judge by his bearing he was at ease in these parts. What's to be done, sir?"

"To be done—to be done?" repeated MacKinnon abstractedly. "It's myself must manage it. No outside help, if I am to stand well in the affair. Now, if Drumfin were not here——"

"Drumfin!" cried MacQuarie, his ferret eyes beads of piercing brightness as he came suddenly into the slant of rays from the inn-window.

"Drumfin? Yes, you toad!" cried the chieftain, his hands on Callum's throat, and there was no question now as to who was master. "What have I said? Have I let it slip my foolish tongue? . . . But if you breathe it, if you even breathe it, I'll——" A hand went to the knife in his stocking.

"Canny, Pennyfuaran, canny," gasped the tacksman, escaping his hold. "Well, well—well, well! What business is it of mine? If Drumfin cares to leave France, if he cares to risk his neck, let him. He'll be none the worse of me, sir."

The young man still glowered at him, his hand on his *sgian dubh*. "Remember," he said.

"What's your will, then, sir," said the other crossly, adjusting his coat-collar. "What's to do in your own affair?"

"Belle is with her, you say? Have you a watch on the cave in case they move?"

"I have set Rob the Tinker, sir."

"Then back to Inshriff with you, until I get quietly clear of the inn here. I'll come on to you there

some time to-night, late or early, as I find it safest. . . . And Callum, see. . . ." He put a finger to shut lips, and tapped his black knife meaningly.

"Well, well, sir," said MacQuarie, expostulation in his accents. And Pennyfuaran went indoors.

A moment later the landlord came out and found the man with the ferret eyes doubled up in a fit of silent laughter beside the horse's head. At sight of the innkeeper, however, he started erect, and asked for a cup of ale. Then he swung on to his pony, and went off cautiously through snow and wind and darkness, and so into the mouth of Glenmore. But so obsessed by one idea was he, that the fury of the elements troubled him but little, and he laughed low as he rode. "Drumfin," he repeated to himself, and chuckled softly.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE CAVE AT CAMERON

It was daylight full and fair when Fraser came to the cross-roads at Strathcoil, two miles west of his last night's resting-place. At the cottage here the old folks were kindly and asked no quizzes about a pedlar, but gave the wanderer a meal beside a log-fire, and straightway packed him to bed. For this old man and his spouse one thing only was evident : here was a traveller spent and famishing, and the remedy was clear. Who he was mattered little ; and they pottered around him with slow feet and bent backs, their courtesy ungrudging and delicate.

When at length the surgeon slept it was deeply, and evening shades were fast thickening ere he wakened to the sound of a well-known voice in the next room. Springing out of bed, he dressed hastily, and came ben to find Charlie Ruapais crouched over the peats, a bowl of broth on his knee.

" *Dhia !* " cried Charlie at sight of him, and laying down the vessel hastily, he caught Fraser's uninjured hand and burst into a fit of the most passionate weeping. Concernedly the old folks looked on, lifting their hands in air, shaking their heads, and whispering in Gaelic.

" Oh, sir, " cried Charlie. " The black day, the black day ! "

The surgeon tried to soothe the little man by patting and hushing, but to no purpose.

"Have you a horse, sir?" sobbed the wizard-face.  
"Oh, sir, have you by any chance a horse?"

"Never a horse, Charlie. Why do you ask?"

"She is at Cameron, sir—Miss Morag, I mean. . . . I've caught my pony afresh, and were you but mounted, we'd be at her side within the hour."

In the light of the pedlar's story, Fraser saw the little man's meaning, and so, turning to his frail host, he explained, in what Gaelic he could command, his instant need of a horse. So impressed had the old man been by the tears of the Ruapais and the grave bearing of Fraser that he doubted little but that a matter of importance was in hand, and forthwith he took the surgeon to a shed where a little garron stood. The saddle was of coarse grass, the stirrups naught but looped ropes of woven bent, but Fraser was in no cavilling mood and mounted at once. One of his few guineas went to the old fellow; Charlie trotted out his pony, and they were off with all speed on the road to Cameron.

They dismounted five minutes after setting out, however, for here the track lay over Ardura Brae; and as they led their panting beasts up the steep, Charlie breathlessly told his story.

About noon on the previous day, Miss Morag, with Belle for maid and himself for gillie, had set out from Aros for Moy. They had come by way of Glenforsa to Inshriff without mishap, save for some bogging of Belle's pony. But just at the entry to Glenmore some six or seven rough fellows had started from the heather, one attempting to seize the bridle of Morag's garron. Whipping the fellow's face, she freed herself, but mired her beast at the

river-side, and so was carried off. Belle was also seized, despite resistance with nails and tongue. As for himself a leg-grip had unhorsed him, yet he was left behind in the chase of the others, and his bolted pony having returned, he captured it and sought to flee homewards. From the manner of the spreading of the assailants over the country, however, he had no choice but to head away from Aros, and take the Strathcoil road, full drive. Then, just as he out-distanced pursuit, his pony in turn got bemired, and there was nothing for it but to take to his heels, leaving the beast to struggle free as best it could. He sought refuge in the wood to which Fraser and the pedlar came some few hours later, and as he hid here close and still, the kidnappers passed on the march for Ardura—Miss Morag and Belle on their garrons, and riding beside them a stout man who wore a coat of many capes and showed wool-plugged ears.

At that time the snow was too light to help his tracking the troop, and so he had to skulk far in the rear, following thus for miles. At last, the falling dark and his ignorance of the strange countryside forced him to give up his tracing of the enemy; but he knew enough of the larger features of the district to hazard a guess as to their goal. Surely the oncoming night would drive them to shelter, if only for the lady's sake; and what more likely than Cameron Cave? And so he found. From the wet sands he had watched the guarded glimmer of their camp-fire in this cavern throughout the night; and, bitter of heart, had lain among weeds and shingle the long forenoon. But no movement had



wall. This was but a foot across, and only some four feet high, so, removing his tricorne, the surgeon got to the angle where rock and wall met, and peered over.

The rich dim light from a peat-fire, all aglow and almost smokeless, fell on Morag's face. She sat on a heap of bracken, a screen of tartan drawn around her, her hands clasped over her knees, her gaze on the fire's red embers. At once the strategist in Fraser gave way to the lover, and for a little he failed to note the disposition of the enemy, for he had eyes only for the light flashing and falling on the girl's cheek and brow—on the clear profile of a face as untroubled as ever it had been in Aros, and as lovely in this place of peril as in the home garden amongst the October roses. Wrapped in a plaid, Belle lay slumbering beside her mistress, and in the obscurity of the cavern's rear, two old crones were hunched. Three rough-looking fellows sat with their backs to the loosely-built wall, passing a snuff-mull at intervals to one another, and Fraser recognised in one the *cuarain* and other oddities of garb that had characterised the Tíree men he had seen at the Fairies' Castle. All were silent, and an air of constraint sat on the men. The flame flickered, and with each of its leaps the white roof of the cavern seemed to close down suddenly on the prisoner, and eerie, threatening shadows to fall on her from the crossed sticks over the fire.

The surgeon retired to crouch in the furze and hold counsel with Charlie. Then, upstanding side by side, they started to race across the intervening ground, and came with all their bodies' weight on the

piled stones of the wall. With a clatter it gave inwards on the heads of the men sitting below, and what further rubble they could seize, the attackers pushed over the fellows sprawling beneath the ruck of this downfall. Fraser, grappling with one of the men, was clouted on the head by a further toppling of stones brought about by the over-zealous gillie, and Charlie himself was impeded for a little by unexpected falls of stone. Morag had now started to her feet in alarm, while in the far corner Belle and the *oailleachean* were whimpering.

But the fortunes of the fight were soon evident. One of the kidnappers had been stunned by the tumble and now breathed deep and snoring as in an apoplexy; another had been knifed by the Ruapais with a venom scarcely to be expected of one so puny, and now lay in a daze of terror that rendered him powerless. As for Fraser's man, the surgeon's left hand had already well-nigh throttled him. Indeed, the task was easy beyond imagining—easy to the verge of ridicule, when one remembered the expense of spirit that had gone to the undertaking; and kneeling with his hand still on the neck of his opponent, Fraser was able to look up at Morag and see her face lit by another glow than that of the firelight, for she had recognised him.

"Quick, Belle! Quick, Charlie!" cried the surgeon. "Quick! To the sands, and make for Moy! I'll follow."

They hurried from the cave, and he was left with the old dames mumbling excitedly, and the only life-like man of the three fast growing weaker under his cramped fingers. He waited until his enemy's

twitchings passed into stupor, and then released his grasp. But scarcely had he risen to his feet when he was overborne by the rush of a fresh assailant, who suddenly entered the cave. From the first Fraser felt that the new-comer's grip was that of a trained wrestler: the clutch of the left arm, and the passage of a hand under it to lever the neck downwards told him that this was not an encounter of so easy disposal as the last. He flung himself flat on the earth, therefore, and rising again instantly, disengaged his head. But his left arm was still held powerfully, and at an attempt to grip his opponent's left, his weak right hand held so feebly that when he essayed haunching his man, he missed. He gripped anew and haunched anew, when he had freed his sound arm, however, and getting the fellow back to back, he threw him with a supreme effort, clear over his shoulders. The man fell heavily; Fraser was kneeling on him next moment, and, pouring with sweat and breathing in short gasps like beasts of the forest that war to the death, they now lay close to the fire, its faint glow revealing their faces to one another.

"MacAllister!" cried the surgeon. "What takes you this gate?"

"Mr. Fraser? And it's you," replied the gipsy in surprise.

It was indeed one of the plague-stricken men, whom the surgeon had nursed back to life at Tigh-ban some weeks before.

"And it's you, sir?" said the fellow, sitting up as Fraser relinquished his hold. "*Och, ochan!* To save my life and then to break my bones, sir!"

"You wrestle well after such an illness, Rob. But why are you here?"

"Och, I'm just anywhere, sir, at times."

"Why, Rob, why?"

"Well, sir—Och, yes, I'll aye mind yon at Tigh-ban—Och, yes, I'll just tell you why."

"Tell me, then."

"Och, yes. It was for the big tacksman I watched the cave—MacQuarie, sir. I ken the lass and I like her—Miss Morag, that is. And Inshriff was to bring help, you see, to get her away. But you werena counted on: and not kenning you, sir, I couldna help a fling at you—and asking your pardon."

"MacQuarie of Inshriff?" said Fraser. "An old man with grey hairs and a ferret look in the eyes?"

"The same, sir. Man, you have him—a ferret, you said—a ferret."

"So MacQuarie knew," said Fraser, musing. "Well, Rob, tell him when he comes that the lady is safe in Moy."

"Och, I'll never face him now, sir. It's mad he'll be. . . . Moy? . . . Och, is it there you go, sir? Then take poor Rob. It's Moy Dance, and oh, but it's grand. Take poor Rob—take poor Rob."

"Moy Dance?" said Fraser, caressing his stiff arm.

"Ay, sir, ay. Och, take poor Rob. For it's to-night you'll see gentrice, I tell you—enough to fill half Edinburgh. A' airts they've come, sir—Kinlochaline, Lorne, Ardgour, and Drimnin. And

there's a deer-tinchel the morn, and you'll think a town was set hereabouts instead of caves and fisher-lads."

"Come then, Rob," said Fraser. "It's quite a raree-show we'll have."

The foolish fellow squealed in delight at the invitation, and went off in front over the sands, whistling and making little goat-like skips this way and that, while Fraser followed slowly through the whins, and at last saw the high and distant tower of Moy show litten windows against the violet sky.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE DANCE AT MOY

TILL he was won back to London town, Fraser never thought to see so many candles alight as he beheld some hours later, when he entered the assembly-room at Moy. He understood now the mock pageant he had beheld as he came from the cave—a group of barefoot half-clad children dancing under the spruce trees on the fringe of the Castle grounds, and carrying burning strips of fir : poor cold little revellers of the night, mimicking the radiance here. Radiance there assuredly was in the longhouse, as the dancing pavilion was named ; but above the lights were high glooms also, where, still and darkling, the portraits of three old-time warriors looked out on the brilliance and movement below. Gloom and shadow deeper still were on the old music-gallery at the far end of the hall ; and out of this dusk, and over the oak of the gallery-screen, swung midwise a little silken banner with the Moy device, the seals supporting, and the scroll : *Vincere vel Mori*. But the armorials of the other MacLeans were not wanting, for between the sconces set around the hall albeit flapping dangerously near the tapers, were embroideries with variants of the arms of the clan—Coll, Ardgour, Dochgarroch, Brollass, Scallasdale, and Treshnish, they ran.

Fraser stood at gaze. Outside were the night and the hills ; and here was something so different from

the wild life of wood and shore he had been leading of late. The shout of the dancers and the beat of their feet in the time of the reel sang in his ear, the sight of the strutting player skirling away as he swung his pipes on a little platform under the music gallery—these were like strong wine to a famished man. It was figure of eight in the reel now, and double time, too, fingers snapping, heels light, thirty couples if there were one, and fingering impatiently at the lame arm, again in a sling, though unsplinted, he looked eagerly about him for Morag. But for his injured limb, he thought, she would scarce recognise him : bathed and shaven, his hair knotted afresh in a broad black ribbon, he felt as if he had but newly come to himself from a land of nightmare. The younger Moy had provided him with a costume of his own that fitted perfectly, and clad in a court-suit of murrey-coloured cloth with stockings of thread to match, he looked not unhandsome, despite his plain features. For the first time in months, also, he wore a solitaire and ruffles of lace, and not unconscious of the grandeur of his raiment he stood in the doorway and looked round, his heel tapping the floor in rhythm with the music.

Close by him were gillies—among them Rob MacAllister, perspiring and gleeful—cottars, crofters, tacksmen, and their women-folk, vigorous in the swift motions of the dance. Yonder, under the little banner of Moy, the more graceful and restrained movements betokened the gentry ; and yonder, too, an occasional kilt and plaid among them told of the presence of an officer from Stirling or

Inveraray, an ensign of the Black Watch, or a lieutenant of Keith's Highlanders.

A portly figure in Highland dress descended from a seat at one side of the dais where the piper stood straining mightily—Moy himself, and treading daintily between the dancer's heels and the candle-drippings, he came down the hall to Fraser. The surgeon, remarking his approach, saw him to be a man of over fifty, light of foot for all his weight of body; a humorous grey eye, a shaven cheek, ruddy and smiling; his manner that of the courtier, and his bow graciousness itself.

"Mr. Fraser, I believe? A King's man, I hear, and of the Navy? Nay, nay, you look at my kilt, and now you think me of the Army. But no, 'tis only a little liberty I take with the law."

"Surely, sir, there's some talk of the Act's repeal?" said Fraser.

"I've heard as much, sir. But no matter for your politics—no matter for your service of the Hanoverian, sir, I claim your better acquaintance for your timely aid to my niece of Aros, and it's my thanks I give you. There's a vast many of the MacLeans would have gladly been in your shoes. And some MacKinnons, too, I wouldna wonder," he added as he broke off chuckling.

"MacKinnons, sir?" asked the surgeon.

"MacKinnons, yes, For you must know that MacKinnon of Pennyfuaran, the girl's own cousin, came to the rescue an hour after you had left the cave: and it's a disappointed man he is, I can tell you."

"Pennyfuaran?" said Fraser. "Why, I know



him. Is he here? Indeed, 'twas but luck that sent me so soon, and you must credit him with a share of your thanks."

Moy smiled mysteriously. "It's more than he'd do for you, Mr. Fraser—more than he'd do for you . . . . But look at the lassie's pluck now! To see her here, fresh and happy as a bird at dawn, after stravaging the country with these wild fellows for two days and a night! Wonderful, I call it, wonderful!"

He asked as to whether young Moy had seen him comfortably disposed, and Fraser answered that he was monstrously obliged by all their kindness.

"After three nights of the heather," he said, my present content is sufficient recompense for any little service I may have rendered your kinswoman."

"Three nights?" cried Moy. "Then you'd be overtired for the next foursome even if your arm allowed, I fear. But let me at least present you to my company, for this reel is about to finish."

They engaged themselves between the swinging dancers and the greasy strip of floor under the candle-sconces, and arrived safely at the platform under the music-gallery. Here Morag was seated on a low couch, and beside her stood Pennyfuaran in kilt and plaid of bright tartan. The lady was in white, with a bunch of rowans in her breast, and she looked down shyly for an instant as Fraser came forward.

"An if I be weary," she said to her cousin, "what tiredness must be Mr. Fraser's lot, after his journeyings of the past week? Let alone injured arms, I fear both of us are too far travelled to set

foot to reels this night." Her little slipper, scarlet as the rowans she wore, twinkled from the muslin folds and vanished. "But you remember each other surely? Cousin, here is Mr. Fraser; Mr. Fraser, Pennyfuaran."

The surgeon bowed to the handsome Highlander, who replied, his face, despite its bronzing, flushing and paling unusually as he gave a clammy hand; and just as the eyes of both men met, the piping ended abruptly on the linked couples swinging for the last time in the reel of the moment. A confusion of voices ensued, and the numerous and hasty presentations in which Fraser now took part, drifted him away from MacKinnon. But once again, across the bobbing heads and puffs and laces, their eyes challenged.

It was not until some time later that Fraser found himself at Morag's side.

"You must have thought me ungrateful, Mr. Fraser," said she, "that thanks were not my first words to you. But, indeed, with so many folks around, it was too hard a task. And now I thank you, sir."

The thanks came in a glance; and to the surgeon the room seemed to sway around him, the piping to die away, and the grey eyes to shine and glow ineffably.

"Did you come straight from Craig to the cave?" she asked.

As briefly as he could he told her his history for the last two days.

"And to think I was warning you of the Sunivaig folk, when it was myself that needed the caution," she cried.

He agreed : and so they smiled and chatted for a space, recounting their adventures again and again, and like happy children, ever finding something more wonderful to wonder at. At last Morag rose.

"But what foolishness for you and me to be story-telling here," she, said "when we should be in the land of Nod, Mr. Fraser ! Weary you have been and weary you will be at this rate of working. Shall I ask Pennyfuaran if you may retire becomingly at this hour ? I see him moving this way ? "

"Pennyfuaran ? No ! " said Fraser, glowering at that chieftain advancing from afar. "Is he the master of the ceremonies here, or only your trusted adviser in these affairs ? "

There was in his tones the hint of a bitterness he could not conceal, for though the matter was but a little one it irked him strangely that she should so defer to Pennyfuaran. For reply Morag turned on him steady eyes, something burning deep in them, and said :

"That is a question, sir."

"I put it down for as much," said Fraser dourly, wondering at her heat, and, guard as he would, he had already caught some of her fire.

"I think it is a question with a taste for gossip behind it," went on the lady, reddening a little.

And Fraser, gulping down wrath at himself and all the universe, was already in deep waters. He began stammeringly :

"I fear you misunderstand—"

She silenced him with a look of flame, and he bowed and turned away slowly. Joining Moy just

then he did not see the fire of the grey eyes die beneath a soft dew of tears ; or her fan artfully plying to hide them. The chief of MacLean was fuming when Fraser came up with him, for a message newly received had perturbed him greatly.

"My people have failed to trace either Tíree men or gipsy-folk," he said. "It was not so in my father's time, Mr. Fraser : we could always lay hands on them then, and they kept pit and gallows busy, I can tell you. Cnoc-na-Croiche was at Gualachaoilish yonder, and you'd often see something hanging on the cross-tree clear on the sky-line—and that's ten miles away from this end Loch Uisg. Lord of Regality my father was, but not even Argyle himself can claim that in these sad days, and when I clap hands on these fellows, it's to a body they call a sheriff in Inneraora they maun go.—A bonnie countryside this is becoming !—But every craig of them will yet wear a hempen collar, I tell you.—A bonnie countryside !—That's what Aros will think it, I swear, when his own daughter is not free to travel it unharmed." And on and on he puffed and threatened.

A little later, as a country dance closed, Fraser felt his arm tugged, and looking round in the crush beside the piper's platform, he saw Pennyfuaran beckoning him. He followed, and the young chieftain slipped quietly on to the stage, making his way to the twilight that held its rear. Here he swung some tapestry aside, and they passed through a doorway.

"By your favour, a word with you in a retired place," whispered Pennyfuaran in the dark of the

passage. "We should be observed if we left the hall by the main door, but this stair leads to the gallery, seldom used and quite secluded, I believe."

They went cautiously up some steep steps of wood and emerged in a place of shadows close to a smoky roof of cracked plaster. Indistinct forms in the darkness showed where, from other days, the musicians' seats still stood, and bulking largely above all was a *clarsach* in its woollen shroud. Outside this black nook the light of the dancing-hall seemed trebly brilliant; below them the appearance of the dancers flitting through, their figures had some touch of the unreal and fairy-like.

"We are private here," said Pennyfuaran, "but none the less we may moderate our voices with advantage, I think. I but wanted to say that Miss MacLean's friends are beholden to you for your kindness to her in the matter of this kidnapping. I am her cousin, and speak for her friends, you understand?"

"I understand," said Fraser curtly.

"But I also wanted to say to you that Miss MacLean's friends know well how things stood in Tìree when Chisholm, the spy, went to his death."

"You mean—what?" asked the surgeon.

"I mean that we know it was his brother-spy who pressed on Angus MacLean to the killing of Chisholm," said the other through close teeth.

"Heavens!" cried Fraser in a whisper, rapid and tense. "I trust neither Miss Morag nor her father know of this?"

"And for why, Mr. Fraser?"

The surgeon looked at him in amazement.

"Come, sir, for why?" pursued Pennyfuaran. "Shall we not tell the lass that you are a manslayer and a spy simply because she has a liking for you?"

Fraser's hand leapt from its sling and sought the place where his hanger was wont to be.

"I take your meaning," he said, recovering himself. "You think it was I who betrayed Chisholm, and trapped MacLean into the killing of him?"

"Think, be damned," said Pennyfuaran. "I ken it, man."

"And I ken it false," said Fraser quietly. "But you're convinced you have the truth of it, I see: and as for myself, I've no desire to probe to the start of the lie. In a dirty business of a defamation such as this, there's always the risk of tarred fingers."

"Tar on your fingers," sneered the other in low cold tones, "would maybe more to your mind than blood on your sword."

"Sir, if the blood were yours, 'twould be six and half a dozen," said the surgeon. "And though my arm is weak, I daresay 'twill serve me for an occasion such as you seem to desire."

"By now, we should have a moon," said the Highlander coolly, "and we can risk an absence at this late hour. Will it please you to move out of doors?"

"Assuredly," said the surgeon.

They turned with wary feet to the door giving exit to the gallery, but a quiet voice from behind the draped harp made them halt suddenly.

"Come back," it said.

"*Dhia!*" said the Highlander, his knees giving,

and grasping a curtain, he stood, frozen with fear, but Fraser moving in the direction of the voice, he at last followed him. Behind the *clarsach* they saw a cloaked figure of a man seated in the shadows, and looking out on the throng of dancers in the blaze of light below. The rant of the pipes seemed to leave him unmoved, and it was not the whirling of the reel he followed with his sad eyes, yet there he sat watching. It was, indeed, only momentarily that he turned his glance on the quarrellers; the next instant his gaze was turned on the hall below.

"Drumfin!" exclaimed Pennyfuaran in an excited whisper. "Still here, and after such a message as yon? The glamour's on you yet, man. What a sorrow you are; for here are incomers enough to-night and a fair peppering of Hanoverians among them."

"Have you got the news yet?" asked the old man, turning his deep-set eyes on the chieftain.

"Never a breath, Drumfin. You still have time to be clear of us all, I'm sure."

"Oh, leave Drumfin to Drumfin then," said the exile: "and consider your own affair—your business with this gentleman here: for it seems to me more pressing than any matter of mine."

"You heard us, sir?"

"Yes, unwilling I heard: but willing enough I intrude. And first, let me tell why I'm here," said the Jacobite. "I came because it's twenty years—God pity me!—twenty years since I last saw an assembly at Moy. Old memories were stirring, and so the chief himself set me here before the dance began. And as he did so, he told me of a service

done to a lady we all know and admire." He bowed to the surgeon. "You see your quarrel is not Greek to me, Mr. Fraser, though the ground of it is a trifle obscure to Pennyfuaran and yourself. It has something to do with a Tíree story that came first from an acquaintance of my own, I believe."

"Give me his name," said Fraser hotly.

"No, I'll not do that, sir. But I'll also say this : that he was an acquaintance of another acquaintance of mine—a lady—la Baronne de Bas-Ondulé. You'll have heard of her, I doubt not?" said Drumfin to the surgeon, but looking meaningly at Pennyfuaran.

"Not I," said Fraser.

"No? And you'll not have a miniature of her next your heart?" said the old man, smiling, his eye still on Pennyfuaran.

"Indeed, no, sir. You mystify me."

"I expected I would, Mr. Fraser; and I am glad I did. And to speak quietly : of two tales on any matter, I'd prefer the one from the man who had no miniature of Bas-Ondulé in his breast-pocket, to the one from the man who had. You take me, Pennyfuaran?"

"I do, sir," said the chieftain.

"Then let your quarrel stand, man."

"There is no occasion, sir," said Fraser in a hot whisper. "I think we both know of other grounds for a mutual distaste. If Mr. MacKinnon has difficulty in finding them, I have none."

"So!" said Drumfin. "So! But Pennyfuaran in his heat has forgotten the sad case of mind and body in which you find yourself, or surely he'd have set his challenge for a fitter time."



"I thank you," said Fraser. "But your scruples are as needless as they are generous, sir. I hope I am not so exhausted as to be unprepared for anything he asks of me."

"Pennyfuaran, man, will you let him?" appealed Drumfin.

"Indeed, Mr. Fraser," protested Pennyfuaran with sudden warmth. "I dealt unfairly with you in my haste: and that's the truth. You are but hanging on your legs, I ken; and I'd as lief kill a whole man as half a one."

The surgeon smiled. "So I may be fit at the earliest then, I make haste to retire," he said.

He bowed awkwardly enough and with stumbling in the darkness, and crept cautiously to the little doorway. Reaching the assembly room, he made brief adieux to Morag, to Moy and some others, and withdrew.

Meanwhile, in the dim gallery above, Drumfin sat and watched.

"You could not make her out from this point," said Pennyfuaran in answer to a question. "She did not dance because of tiredness consequent on her late adventures, and she is now seated on a couch under this gallery. But since we disperse before long, you should see her cross the floor."

He took his leave of the exile, and quietly joined the throng in the hall.

Half an hour later, Morag stood for a little in the centre of the dance-room, Pennyfuaran by her side, attentive, docile, discreet. She was saying good-bye to her acquaintance right and left, with many laughing apologies for her absence from the

reels. Wearied, yet beautiful in her langour, she turned eyes, sad beneath the merriment they assumed, to the old music-gallery, and looked curiously at a corner of it where something seemed to draw her gaze. But nothing was visible there save the high glooms and shadows. And yet among these sat a man with silver hair, who bent his head on his hands as he beheld her, and groaned in inward agony :

“ The red rowans and the little red shoes and the dress of muslin white. . . . And her mother’s face, God pity me ! ”

## CHAPTER XXII

### NIGHT IN THE WOODS

FRASER left the longhouse in order to return to his room in the Castle, but, crossing the intervening strip of greensward he halted to look round at the half-moon surging through white billows of cloud to the east of Ben Buie's peak. The enfolding woods murmured; the voice of distant inland streams was heard; the cool night called him, wearied one, to its heart, and he turned off through the laurels to the tall pines' witchery of shine and shade.

Fatigue oppressed him, and yet the wheels of his mind raced in fevered haste. Again and again his high words with Morag and his quarrel with Pennyfuaran were re-enacted in his hot brain, and ever that fiery look of the girl's burned through all his fancies. Unhappy, he passed from the screen of pines and came through oak and sycamore to a little track that led down to a stream of full volume flowing quietly through level ground. It was crossed by a rough bridge of wood, and here he stood for a little to watch the eddies swirling like smoke-wreaths from under the bleached grasses at the water's edge. But, restless still, he returned to the pinewood, and paced noiselessly over its carpet of brown needles. From far he heard the beat of the dancers' feet and the faint note of the pipes. Then the music fell still for a space longer than the

usual interval, and a sound of distant voices took the air: the assembly was breaking up. The succeeding silence oppressed, and he halted as if to hear some whisper across its vastness, for it was even as if the cold beauty of this world of night were articulate, and yet, because of his distraction, he could not hear.

He came back aimlessly in the direction of the stream, and was about to emerge from the shade of the oaks when Morag's voice fell on his ear: earnest, imploring, entreaty most passionate, these were her accents; and next moment he beheld her coming towards him. By her side a cavalier, cloaked and muffled, stalked on, irresponsible. He saw them pause at the bridge, their talk serious, their voices low; he saw Morag's Nithsdale hood fall back, and the man replace the covering deftly and with a familiar air, and at the sight his teeth gritted, his temple pulses throbbed. Then he turned off in rapid silent flight.

Barely half an hour later, Pennyfuaran, whom the quarrel had no less excited, swung hastily down the path to the rustic bridge, and saw two figures start apart at his approach. As he passed, Morag's grey eye came liquid into the moonbeams for an instant, and in quick surprise the chieftain lifted his cap and paused momentarily. The full significance of the discovery seemed to reveal itself to him just then, and, gnawing savagely at his underlip, he strode on again, making for the shore, where he paced the white sands endlessly, a consuming fire of rage and despair in his breast.

Some few minutes after the chieftain had gone

Morag and her brother said adieux at the Castle porch, but it was hours before the surgeon and his rival returned from their feverish pacings through the night. As luck would have it, the Highlander crossed the greensward from the east, just as Fraser approached from the fringe of the northward pines; and at sight of each other they halted as if suddenly turned by the moonlight to statues of black marble. Like black marble, too, the Castle rose beside them, grim and dark, save for a single light in the porter's window.

In his heart each said: "Then it was he!"; in his heart each felt the riot of the passions of the homicide. Yet they stood as if frozen in the cold moonlit air, and spoke never a word. At last Pennyfuaran shrugged his shoulders and, approaching the Tower's gateway, rapped and entered; and Fraser, waiting until he judged the chieftain had reached his quarters, knocked in turn and was admitted also.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE RIVALS

"A SOUTHERN loon," sobbed Pennyfuaran, "a lousy mariner man, Drumfin. And me of the race of kings !"

They stood in a little glade of the Moy woods, Drumfin, cloaked and high-booted, leaning against a fir-bole, and regarding in silence the passion of MacKinnon, who marched to and fro as if in a stage-play, his hair dishevelled, his face begrutten. Although it was morning the close forest-roof of pine and spruce and larch made a twilight in the place.

"God kens," went on the young man, "it was little I thought of herself and much of the lands of Aros, when first I quested her. But now 'tis all another story, and it's the white truth I'm telling you. Had she but a single baw-bee, or had she the Arkaig gold, it were one to Pennyfuaran : rich or poor, sir, I love her to desperation." Unmanned, he hid his face in his hands, and rocking on his feet, groaned, "Her voice, her look ! Oh, the eyes of her, the eyes of her !"

Drumfin held his peace, but picking up the other's bonnet from earth, he held it out to him ; and MacKinnon, beholding the exile's impassiveness, snatched the cap indignantly.

"Have you bowels of compassion ?" he cried. "Are you but frosted ice, Drumfin ?"

MacKinnon," he said, "and a trifle *mêlangé*, as we say across the water. If I were younger, I'd try dissuasion with you; but as it is, I must even let you gang your gate, and wish well to both of you."

And this is how it was that, when, a few hours later, Fraser and the chieftain met by chance in this same strip of woodland, Pennyfuaran drew steel at once. The surgeon, for all his weakness in the sword arm, was not slow to follow suit, and drew a hanger of young Moy's which he was wearing.

"It may be of interest to you, Mr. Fraser, to learn something of a side of this affair of which a Southron naturally takes notice when he goes a-courting," said Pennyfuaran darkly as he folded his plaid and laid it at the foot of a mossy rock. "I but heard it this morning, and it's this: Miss MacLean's father is a poor man; and her dowry will be little or nothing. Of course, I only mention this matter in the passing, but I thought it of interest, and so may you. . . . By the by, about this arm of yours that needs a matter of weeks for healing—I fancy I saw it used quite comfortably no later than last night, sir."

He rattled on, tightening the belt on his philabeg as he spoke, while Fraser divested himself of arm-sling and coat and rolled up his shirt-sleeves. At the first hint of commerce, the surgeon's face had flushed; but in the end the excited garrulity of his adversary lent no change to his features except an added grimness to their natural gravity.

"On guard, sir," said Pennyfuaran; and they bent their knees, their swords at the approach.

But no sooner had they begun than they ended, for at the sound of a low voice close at hand their arms were lightly sheathed; with one movement they crouched to earth, and, peering beneath the densely set columns of the trees, they saw the white leggings of King George's red-coats advancing stealthily. The quiet voice spoke again, and the tight-buttoned legs halted.

The duellists lay close together now, and the chief's dark hunting tartan covered the white shirt of his coatless adversary, as they screened themselves behind a fallen fir-bole.

"Listen," whispered Pennyfuaran. "There's a second voice: and I know him—the ferret! He's there—Callum MacQuarie, as I'm a Gael! And after all his oaths to me! . . . Listen! . . . . Drumfin is the name he is naming. Look to him washing his hands in air and laughing to himself and cringing to the captain, the toad! That's Fawkener—Captain Fawkener—Fort-William is his station. . . . Look here, Mr. Fraser, this affair of ours can wait still longer." He gloomed regretfully into the surgeon's face from where he lay, not a foot off. "Fast to the Castle, and later so will I. Take the way of the sands. Warn Moy or his son. If you can find neither readily, lose no time but get to my bedroom, pull aside the hangings at the bed-head there, and rap seven times on the door you'll discover. Drumfin will answer, and you must tell him what you've seen here."

"You trust me?" said Fraser, smiling—"Me—a spy?"

Pennyfuaran flushed. "Yes," he said. "And



God knows why I do it. . . . But fast ! Not a moment to lose ! Tell Drumfin I advise Kinloch as safest. And meanwhile I'll lead these hounds off the scent, and, if time permit, throttle one of them—a friend of mine, Callum MacQuarie by name. Haste, man, haste ! ”

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE QUARREL

ON the afternoon of the day following the irruption of the red-coats, Morag took her accustomed walk with Belle by the side of quiet Loch Uisg, far from the bustle of the search at the Castle. Their converse was of Drumfin and his flight accompanied by Fraser; for the inner circle at Moy who knew of Drumfin's presence there, comprised both gentle and simple, and a secret bond of intimacy seemed to link all who were free of entrance to this magic ring.

"Puir body! and a cold day for him on the hill!" said Belle. "As kindly a man and as harmless as ever I saw. What the sorrow harm has he done them? What ails them at him, that they should harry him through the heather like a driven hare?"

"How you talk, Belle," said Morag irritably. "Is it not because he is aiding Drumfin?"

"It's Drumfin himself I mean," said Belle.

"Oh!" said Morag, reddening a little, "I thought it was of Mr. Fraser you spoke."

She walked on, brooding over the events of the night of the dance: her brother, Pennyfuaran, the surgeon, Drumfin—all in her mind's eye by turns; but oftenest she came back to Norman and his wild life. At their last meeting she had sought to learn the truth from him regarding the story of Fraser's adventures in Tiree, but all she had

succeeded in eliciting were mysterious suggestions as to the danger of a Jacobite agent's task, and the need for secrecy. The interview had ended by her pleading with him to leave his perilous work for this broken race of Stuart, whose waning hopes he so bewailed. But now as she thought of Drumfin and his companion, hounded through the hills of Aros, her old compassion for the Prince renewed itself, her old hatred of Hanover revived. And yet—and yet the glamour and the grace were fading from her vision of a revival of the old clan-life; every day, indeed, her hopes of the cause were fainter; and hints of the wild ways of the Prince, which in former times she had brushed aside in scorn, were remembered afresh and dwelt upon. After all, the sleepy, orderly regime that Hanover promised might not be so great an evil as the reign of a Prince debauched, or a return of the stormy days of the chiefs and the clans.

"Would he had never left France!" she said suddenly to Belle.

"Miss Morag!" Belle stopped in her heavy lurching walk, and lifted her hands in horror. "Och, but I'm wonnerin' at you. It's Drumfin you mean now?"

"Yes, Drumfin," persisted the lady. "If the cause is so hopeless, why should he have so embroiled us?"

"I'm wonnerin' at you, Miss Morag! Och! I'm wonnerin' at you," was all Belle permitted herself to reply, and she shook her head and fell behind, casting angry glances at her mistress the while. Herself contemptuous of the Jacobite interest, she

had her enthusiasms of sentiment for some among the supporters of this hope forlorn : Drumfin was one, and Morag was another. But here was a reversal of ideals with a vengeance, and she resented it, not so much because it suggested somewhat of disloyalty, as that she did not understand the hidden workings that had brought about the change. Again and again she shook her head in disapproval, and finally sulking outright fell far behind her mistress.

Accustomed to these fits of vapours in her maid, Morag went on unattended, and soon was out of sight of Belle. The track rising and falling in hillocky fashion came close to the water's verge ; on the landward side the hill rose steep and wooded, and the spot seemed loneliness itself, save for a hawk that soared as in menace, midway between her and the battlemented cliffs of the opposite shore.

Fraser and Drumfin, lying at watch, high on a spur of Creigaven beheld her figure come slowly into view around a promontory.

"A lady in a blue riding-habit, but on foot," said the surgeon. "It's Miss Morag, I think."

"Your eyes are young," said Drumfin. "I cannot recognise her from this height. But it's doubtless she, for she takes after her mother, that lass, aye given to lonely walks and brooding." He sighed, and seemed to dwell on old memories for a space. "It's scarcely safe, though," he went on, "for her to be so far from Moy and unattended, too—with the countryside so full of soldiery and gipsies as it is."

"Look," said Fraser suddenly. "That was a prophecy, I fear? Did you not see the birches move down there?"

He pointed to a wood on a hill-slope half a mile behind Morag's slow-pacing figure, where a single unit of the birch-planting tossed heavily, its leaves shimmering in a sudden sunburst.

"There's a man in that tree taking the lie of the land," said Fraser. "Wait. . . . He's down. . . . Look there."

Far on the bare sunlit hillside, two dots of men emerged from the wood, and, running for a little, flung themselves prone on the heather, then crawled on again and lay flat once more.

"Is it the girl they're following?" asked Drumfin.

"There is none else to follow," said Fraser putting off his cloak.

"You are going?" asked the exile.

"Yes, keep us in view, sir, and help if need be."

What Morag's reverie was at the particular moment when Fraser brushed through a copse on the slope above her, she could never afterwards recall, but it seemed the most natural thing in the world that the surgeon in person should step into her thoughts just then. Yet she greeted him coldly.

"Sir," she said, "I give you a good evening."

"Madam," he said as coldly, "a fair evening to you. You are far from Moy to be unattended."

"Not so, sir surgeon, for it seems that you still play warden to me." Her eyes flashed angrily. "I go back even now," she said.

There was dismissal in her tones as she turned,

and the whole miserable scene of the tiff at the assembly came back to him; but he wheeled about as if to accompany her. She halted smiling.

"I hope there will be no occasion for a further indebtedness, Mr. Fraser. There are Hanoverian soldiery enough in Aros to protect us all, I trust."

"And yet they were not far from Cameron Cave two nights ago?"

She flushed angrily, and walked on. "I should not remind myself so readily of Cameron Cave, sir, if I were you," she answered. "It sounds a trifle vainglorious."

"Madam," he said, "if it sounds warning also, I care not."

She stopped again. "I tell you I aspire to no further indebtedness, sir. Will you, indeed, thrust your company upon me?"

For answer Fraser set his face like a flint, stalking on ahead of her towards Moy; and at last she resumed her walk so that in a little they were side by side, pursuing the narrow track in silence and as if in haste to be rid of each other's company. It was thus that Belle found them when they suddenly came round a bend of the road face to face with her.

"Keep me! What's this? You've been crying, Miss Morag?"

"Nonsense, Belle, I'm hot and tired, that's all. Mr. Fraser and I have just escaped from the most dreadful band of brigands, you see." She was derisive in her scorn. "But now we are safe at last. Good-bye, Mr. Fraser."

The surgeon looked coldly at the little hand, and

bowing over it, took his place at her side as she continued her walk.

"I shall go on a little way yet," he said.

They went forward again, and Belle followed gloomily; here was a further knot she could not unravel. Were these good folk and herself in their sober senses?

"Look you, Miss MacLean," said Fraser after a space, "I was rude to you at the dance in the matter of Pennyfuaran, but you have punished me already in a way you know nothing of."—He had a vision of a bridge with two figures on it, seen dimly in a moonlit glade—"You can add nothing to that if you torture me from here to Moy."

"To Moy?" she cried, halting once more.

"I go on to Moy," he said stubbornly, and was still.

"Oh," she cried. "You treat me like a bairn, sir."

"Madam, it's a whipped child you've made of me," he said bitterly, and they paced on in an angry silence.

It was just as they came in sight of the Castle that Morag saw Fraser glance round apprehensively at the wood on the hill above the road; next she saw him pause, and turning to look, she beheld the figures of two men slinking behind the larches on the fringe of the copse. Then the surgeon's hand went to his hanger; the two fellows instantly broke from the planting and made for the open corrie; a third, seeming to rise from the earth, joined them, and all were instantly over the hill's shoulder. They did not disappear so quickly, however, but that the

observers could make out that they were wild unkempt fellows, wearing leg-coverings of rough hide.

"Why!" said Belle, "they wear *cuarain*. It's the Tiree men again, and the Sidier Roy not a mile off."

"Tiree men if you like, Belle," said Fraser smiling : "but Miss Morag will have it that they are brigands. And it's second sight she has, I think : for she was telling us of them before they even appeared."

He ascended the slope, as if in pursuit of the fleeing islesmen. "Good-bye," he called, waving his hat. "*A bas les brigands, mademoiselle !*"

Morag paled at the taunt. She beheld in a flash the cause of the surgeon's intrusion, and saw now what this forcing of his escort meant.

"Oh, stay, Mr. Fraser!" she called, but he was already out of sight over the rise of the hill.

"Oh, Belle!" said the girl, turning helplessly to the maid with tear-filled eyes ; but Belle, scornful and puzzled by turns, received her testily.

"Och, what has come over you, ma'am?" said she. "You tell him to go when he'd bide, and to bide when he'd go. This day or two past you're beyond my comprehension entirely, Miss Morag—entirely."



## CHAPTER XXV

### BESIEGED

“ HERE is Craig at last,” said Fraser. “ Rest in the heather whilst I forage.”

Ghastly pale from the exhaustion of continued flight, Drumfin nodded ; the surgeon, despite his aching arm, had supported him for the last three miles. The disposition of the red-coats had turned them away from the short-cut by Loch Fuaran, and once more Fraser had to take the weary road by Spelve shore. Ardura passed, they felt safer, for now they had left the direct route between Moy and Duart, where the Fort-William soldiery had a temporary garrison.

A chill wind blew, it was dusk already, and lowering clouds were everywhere in the west, when Fraser, carrying a pot of milk and some bannocks, returned to the hollow where the old Jacobite lay. They ate and drank greedily.

“ I’m for no more nights in the heather than I can help, Mr. Fraser, after this spell,” said Drumfin ; “ though this, through your kindness, is pleasanter than I had hoped. But I tell you fairly, you risk much in aiding a man in my case. Why you do it, God kens ! ”

“ Instinct, I suppose,” said the surgeon smiling. “ There is an evil face with those soldier-folk, a man named MacQuarie, and though it’s four days since first I set eyes on him, even yet his airs make

me grue. 'Twas enough for anyone of my way of feeling to know him on the other side to you ; instinct, as I say,—instinct did the rest, and bade me take your part."

He stopped, astounded at the discovery of himself as fairly a rebel at last, aiding an insurgent in his flight from His Majesty's soldiers. Very far away, indeed, seemed his service on the old *Theseus* with its stuffy hammock-hospital, from this free life in the wind and the rain. And far away, too, seemed the Ian Fraser—the Whigamore of other days—from the present partisan of lost causes and broken hopes. He shrugged his shoulders lightly. As well on one side as another, he told himself, if that side could produce a man so clean and strong in action as Drumfin, so chivalrous, so responsive to every delicate overtone of life. Yet, even as he reasoned, he flushed guiltily : for in his heart he knew that many motives had prompted his present course, and not the least of these had been Morag's espousal of the cause by which the old exile held.

"Instinct ? " said Drumfin. "Instinct let it be. In any case my thanks to you again, sir. And new thanks also for the present fare—from the bottom of my heart, or of my appetite, shall I say ? "

"That reminds me," said Fraser. "In the kitchen where I got these scones you praise so mightily, I saw a face I should remember, but cannot. I trust he was no unfriend ; but he glanced at me like one while the goodwife poured the milk for me : a wild tyke, but I cannot place him. And, mind you, always his eye on this tell-tale sling on my arm."

He pushed a tuft of heather aside and looked down through the dusk at the huddle of thatched roofs beside the dim river.

"Surely not a King's man so far afield?" said Drumfin.

"Who'll say what strange crop will grow where gold is raining?" said the other. "Look at this MacQuarie, selling you as he did. If this new face is a traitor's also, we should have done better by starving until we drew Kinloch. Shall we to the road again? But bide you a little, and I'll return this pitcher, making that an excuse for sounding this fellow."

He was gone some time, and when he returned, it was by devious ways, although the dark was falling.

"No sign of him now," he said; "and the good wife has a new grip of her tongue. It looks black for us that he should have left the house, and the night so threatening. I'll warrant he's on watch for you or me, sir, but we'll stir for Kinloch, all the same. You know the road, you say, and you're sure the landlord there is friendly?"

"Yes," said Drumfin, rising and joining him on the rude path. "Friendly—friendly in half-hearted fashion like the lave nowadays. . . . *Och, ochan*, the weary road, Mr. Fraser, the weary road! . . . Well, I've had my last taste of old Scotland, sir, and I'll soon cut ower the water again! . . . The weary road! . . . But it's just the same heather and rock I'll see in dreams, lad, when I tramp the Paris causey, I'm thinking."

"I'm sure, sir," said Fraser respectfully, touched by the old man's emotion.

"Ay, ay. And I'll be thinking my little lodging in the Rue Roquette none so taking as a cave on Beinn-nan-Uaimh that I ken well. Oh, it's there I lay often and oft, dry and snug on my heather bed, and looked out on the sea and the hills of God spread pure and sunswept in the airs of the morning."

"I understand, sir; I understand," said the younger man softly.

"Do you think I'd open my heart to you if you did not?" asked the exile almost fiercely. Then his voice grew soft again, and he went on: "*Mo thuaigh, mo thuaigh!* my country, sir, my country! Oh, the glens and the bens and the children of them that are as nought and for ever!"

"'Twas over Aros township your cave, sir?" asked Fraser seeking to distract him from his melancholy.

"Ay, on the hill above Aros. Ah, Aros of the bens, where is the hill like Beinn-nan-Uaimh on a clear day of autumn, with all Albainn at my feet? Over Ben Shiente you'd look to Moidart, sir; and beyond that, far and shining, like a dream of the heavenly places, the Coolins in pinnacles of white. But Ichabod, Ichabod—the red sorrow's at my heart for the days that will never return. *Mo thuaigh, mo thuaigh!* My longing and my pain, my longing and my pain!"

As they came down by the rushes and bog of the Goladoir, squalls and rain-bursts were added to the discomfort of the thick darkness. They held by the river's right bank till the ford was reached, and here, although the water came to their middles, Drumfin guided safely over.

"'Tis fourteen years since I last crossed," said the exile, "and yet the stream's bed is but little altered, it would seem. Ah, the days—the old lost days!"

Two miles more of a tramping through the moss, and then they stood, wet and cold in the gusty dark, knocking at the door of Kinloch Inn. The burly figure of MacKay, the landlord, made shadow and barrier in the fan of light that fell on them from the opened door; but when he saw Drumfin's face, pale beneath its tan, he drew aside instantly.

"Come in, sir, and welcome," he cried. "Bless you, you'll be the weary one with never a horse beneath you on this night of nights."

"Weary's the word, MacKay," said Drumfin. "Cold and wet and weary!"

Yet half an hour later—so assiduous was the Skyeman—Drumfin sat in dried clothes on one side of a roaring fire of logs in the upper room, and equally cosy on the other side was Fraser. It was well on for midnight now, and each felt his eyelids weighty; but the curious feeling of being too tired even for rest, which comes from extreme exhaustion, was heavy on both; and thus they sat half-drowsing in the warmth of the chamber, when a hammering on the hostelry door, woke them fully. Like a cat Drumfin was on his feet, and loosening his hanger, crept to the balustrade at the stair-head and leant over.

"MacKay," he called in a loud whisper, as he heard the landlord come into the kitchen below, "you ken me; and I solemnly charge you to ward your trust, for here's a youth with me, who has

nothing to do with my affair. Let none enter unchallenged, man. You ken the price that's on me these fourteen years, but it's the last ditch, MacKay, and I'll die hard."

"Blessing on you," whispered back MacKay. "Keep you still; and I'll speak them fair. Trust me to manage them, sir."

"This is the work of your man at Craig with his eye on your sling," said Drumfin to Fraser. "He's got the red-coats on our track despite the nightfall. Listen—listen."

Leaning over the stair-rail, they heard the parley in Gaelic.

"Who is there?"

"Open."

"My door is open to every man with a name. Who is it?"

"Open and see: open speedily."

"What are your wants?"

"Open, MacKay."

"Unless you name your name, I tell you, your bed is waiting you elsewhere this night."

"Open, MacKay, open."

"Then if these be all your manners there will be no opening," cried MacKay in anger, dropping an extra bar across the door and walking away from it.

He lifted his lit cruise from the floor, and stood motionless at the stair-foot, waiting. There was a scurry of feet outside and a heaving of the door as several bodies fell full weight against it; but the great wooden bars did not give. Next came a musket report, a smell of gunpowder, and, with an oath, MacKay bent to grip his foot.

"The dogs!" he roared, and fell.

Fraser and Drumfin were by him instantly, and before the next shot came, they had dragged him into the kitchen.

"A bullet in the ankle," said the surgeon, examining hastily. "He has fainted from the shock."

Having nothing wherewith to attempt the extraction of the ball, he quickly dressed and bandaged the wound, and as he did so MacKay came to himself.

"Curse them," growled the landlord. "But gentlemen," he said, "I have guns, despite the Disarming Act. There are muskets and powder and ball under the middle flags of the inner room there."

With fire-irons for levers the fugitives prized up the stone and secured the arms and ammunition. As they replaced the slab a tousy-headed lad appeared from the back-quarters, rubbing gummy eyelids.

"Here, Hamish," called MacKay. "There are robbers outside, and it's shot I am. Help these guns upstairs and come back to me."

Though shaking with terror, and snuffling tears he strove to hide, the lad obeyed, and began bearing arms to the upper chamber; while with a run, for all his years and weariness, Drumfin passed him on the gangway, and reaching his room, commenced extinguishing fire and candles.

Fraser assisted, and when all was in darkness, the last ember black, they unfastened the inner shutter and flung wide the casement. A splatter of rain-drops entered; a cold blast ran round the room,

and with it came the noise of waves ; but for the rest there was deep silence everywhere. Born of the night there suddenly came a point of fire and a report, and Drumfin, taking quick aim at the dot of light, replied with his musket. The echoes roused on Ben More and called to each other fainter and fainter ; but the Inn stood miles distant from any dwelling, and a thousand echoes could bring no succour in this lonely place. There were two more splashes of light in the outer blackness, and a bullet whizzed past the heads at the window, shattering the panel of the door of the room. Below them they heard a shot within the house, and MacKay called up that it was his serving-man at a hole in the shutter. And now the air bore mingled odours of sea-wrack and sulphur-fumes, and a sinister atmosphere of battle and treachery seemed to surround the besieged, so that they started at the scratching of a rat in the wall, or at a sudden onset of the wind.

“Do you think there are more than six in the attack, Mr. Fraser ?” asked Drumfin. “To judge by their fire, I’d say four only. But in affairs of this kind I’ve always found it safer to allow a surplus.”

There was the alertness of a young warrior in this man with the silver hair, as again and again after patient waiting, he took steady aim and fired. Forty minutes of give-and-take in this work was followed by a lull that lasted throughout the night.

“They save their powder,” said Drumfin grimly. “Let them.”

Daybreak saw the watchers in the upper chamber



peering with grey and worn faces on field and shore that seemed untenanted by aught but the screaming gull and the wheeling tern.

"Have they gone?" asked the surgeon, crossing the window unguardedly to glance at the Inn's western side.

He was answered by a whiff of fiery smoke from behind a rock on the shore, and a bullet sang high through the room to bury itself in the ceiling. Immediately a second whipped out on the keen air as if from behind the house, and Drumfin, descending to enquire, returned with the news that the enemy were in the rear as well. It seemed that the serving-boy going to draw water at the spring in the walled patch behind, had found his few wits scared to none by a sudden bullet burying itself in the lintel above his head. It was only a little later that Fraser, opening the window of another room that gave on the east, had the shoulder-cape of his coat cut in two by a shot. And still nothing was to be seen of the enemy.

"Caution is not a word for it," said the old Jacobite, coming up to the room where the surgeon lay close by the window, adjusting a loose flint with a sliver of wood. "They're all around, and never a head showing anywhere. There, again!"—and a spatter of twigs and plaster from the ceiling came down afresh as a bullet took it. "It's you I'm wae for, lad," he said to Fraser, "tied as you are to a *bodach* with a price on his head. And I'll say this, that for soldier-folk, they look like earning that same price in easy fashion."

He reconnoitred from an angle of the window.

"By their firing now, I take it that they are certainly not more than six, Fraser, for if they were, they'd have more than four dispositions, as I said before. Now, if I made a feint to the west shore there, it should be easy for you to slip off to the hill unnoticed, lad. Then as for MacKay and the halflin—well, we could tie them hand and foot as if we had forced them. In the end there would only be old Drumfin to pay the piper."

"Tush!" said Fraser, smiling. "That's my answer, sir. . . . There again!"

Another patch of ceiling fell, and yet there was no sign of a marksman, only a little haze of smoke drifting over what had been the water-line at dawn. The tide was fast retreating, and where waves had rolled earlier in the morning, were now long slabs of wet grey sand, broken by dark dots and lines of rock and sea-wrack. The sun rose higher, and gradually all the gaunt hills were uncanopied—all, save Ben More, where a great cloud-roll drifted up the mountain-flanks to hang awesome round its summit. And still round the little block of buildings dropped midmost of this wilderness by the lochside, went the plopping of shot and the puffing of powder-smoke from the enemy, hidden and surrounding, with never a response from the house itself.

Fraser going below to where MacKay lay groaning and squeezing the halflin's hand, found him fevered and sweating profusely. The pain in the foot was agonising, but he controlled himself in order to ask the news.

"You shoot no longer, sir," he said. "And why?"

"Because there's not a head to see, MacKay.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### A LADY IN A BLUE RIDING-HABIT

JUST how Fraser and the exile came through Glen Seileasdair to Gribun, and took hiding with the fishers there ; how in a night of storm the red-coats came on them ; how Drumfin escaped to sea in an open boat ; and how next day the surgeon was marched a prisoner through the wilds of Glenmore to lonely Strathcoil—is it not now all an old story in Aros Isle ?

Fraser slept soundly that night, although his bed was but dried bracken and his roof a thatch that leaked, for his exhaustion was extreme, and if he were to be transported on the morrow he could not have waked a moment to commiserate his doom. He was still dozing deep in the early morning, when the officer commanding the company shook his shoulder. Captain Fawkeners face was red ; his eyes like beads, hot and black ; his gait shaky.

“Where’s rebel ?” he asked thickly.

“I know nothing of him,” said Fraser wearily, tossing over, and half-asleep already.

“But you had rendezvous ?”

“Oh, yes,”

“Where ?”

The surgeon was silent, though far from sleeping now.

“Where, sir, where ?”

“I shall not tell you.”

Fawkeners smiled foolishly and lurched forwards.

“ Good fellow, good fellow ! Tell me, now, tell me.”

Then Fraser’s continued silence made him tearful, and he declared the surgeon’s conduct wondrous shabby, wept more copiously still, vowed his feelings deeply wounded, and departed.

Fraser slept again—heavy restful sleep, dreamless in abysses of unconsciousness ; but in an hour’s time the tipsy captain’s return broke in once more on these slumbrous delights. Fawkenner was still drunk, but more composed.

“ Where’s rendezvous ? ” he said, pointing a podgy menacing finger at his prisoner, while the two grenadiers behind him grinned at the figure he cut.

The surgeon still held his peace and to repeated queries gave no reply.

“ Damned traitor,” summed up Fawkenner, and lurched past his men and through the doorway.

To sleep once more, but not for long, for scarcely had another hour gone, when the vinous breath of the captain was around him again as he wakened him with a grip on his shoulder.

“ Come, sir, where’s my man ? Must tell me—must tell me ! ”

Fraser shook his hand off in disgust, and, unanswering, rolled himself anew in his cloak.

“ Won’t ?—won’t ? ” cried Fawkenner, his red face darkening in passion. “ Damned renegade ! Damned traitor ! ”

He cursed erratically but forcibly for a spell, and retired to seek the sympathy of his lieutenant ; but that phlegmatic youth was used to his captain’s vagaries, and received his story with an ill-concealed yawn. The yawn, however, was not repeated, for

Hodson found that the few words of soothing he had found potent in previous outbreaks seemed powerless here; indeed, the drunken officer was working himself to heights of rage his junior had never before witnessed, and a time came when the lymphatic lieutenant was roused to fear for the prisoner's safety. He knew Fawkener's temper on its lower levels, but this passion was new to him, and he dreaded the powers of wrath still latent. So, when at last the tippler drowsed, face forward on the table at which they sat, Hodson stole out to the sentry.

"Jenkins!"

The soldier saluted and came forward.

"Where is the man you spoke of following us last night for so long?"

"In the house by the bridge, sir."

"He seemed to know Mr. Fraser?"

"Yes, sir."

"Send him here."

It was Charlie Ruapais who came back with the soldier, and fearing some new danger, the little gillie snivelled dolorously, for the young officer, so languid in yesterday's march, looked very wide awake and business-like now.

"You are a friend to Mr. Fraser?"

"In a way, sir—a kind of a servant, sir."

"Servant or no—you are friendly?"

"Oh, surely, sir—surely."

"Mr. Fraser has other friends at Moy, has he not?"

"Many, sir, many."

"Then hurry to Moy with all speed and tell that Mr. Fraser is here and his life in danger."

“ His life, sir ? But— ? ”

“ His life—his life in danger, and instant danger here, at Strathcoil,” said the young man sharply.

“ Now, go at once.”

The Ruapais looked to earth a moment as if in thought, and then swung round, taking Ardura Brae at the trot, while Lieutenant Hodson came back slowly and meditatively to the prisoner's hut. The surgeon no longer slept deeply : he tossed as in a nightmare upon his rude bed of bracken, and looking in on him from the open doorway, the erstwhile listless youth sighed heavily. But glancing hastily round at the sentry, witness of this involuntary exhibition of sentiment, he immediately elaborated an enormous yawn, and retired to his quarters.

It was noon before Fawkenner awoke, and at once he made for Fraser's hut, his red face darker now, almost, indeed, a chocolate-colour.

“ You dog ! ” he roared. “ You will not speak, eh ? ”

Fraser could see that the man was mad with anger ; he could see also that the faces of the guard accompanying the captain bore traces of some strong emotion suppressed : could it be fear ? What was afoot ? But he lay back on his bed of bracken, his hands underneath his head, and stared contempt at the bully. This look of disdain only enraged Fawkenner further and with a sudden kick he sent bench and prisoner over in a heap.

“ You dumb dog ! ” he screamed.

In an instant Fraser was on his feet and had him by the throat ; and though his lame arm stung for

a moment, he felt an infinite relish in the pang as he crushed the wine-stained face backwards. Yet the pleasure was short and sharp as the pain, for the grenadiers rushed in and pulled them asunder.

The captain glared at his assailant and then gave a quick command, and the next moment the surgeon found himself outside in the misty noon-tide air. There was a hint of frost abroad, and the nearer hillsides showed a faint apple-green through the thin fog that walled off the rest of the world. It was all like an ugly dream, and the pervading mist with the automaton-like figures of the Sidier Roy, moving in and out of it, enhanced the illusion. Out of the mist, too, came an order, and Fraser was marched up a little height to where four broken walls showed the skeleton of an ancient homestead. The faces of the men holding his arms, the prisoner noted, seemed suddenly to have turned the same chocolate-colour as their captain's, and they wetted dry lips constantly, exchanging covert glances the while. He saw the lieutenant expostulating with Fawkenner; and saw him also thrust rudely aside as the captain went off out of sight behind the curtains of vapour.

There was silence for a little, then out of the stillness below came a throb of marching feet, and Fawkenner appeared from the folds of mist once more, a sergeant with a file of six men following. Thirty paces off they halted, and set their musket-flints, and as they did so, the men at his side released their hold and left him standing alone against the broken wall. Then the full horror of the whole business flashed on him, as the captain's

voice, cracked and unnatural in its excitement, came up to him where he stood.

"Still dumb?" he cried. "Go on, sergeant."

The sergeant gave a quiet order, and the six figures in front of the surgeon tapped some little black grains into the pans of their muskets, slinging their powder flasks aside in a clock-work movement.

"Ready," said the sergeant.

"Stop," cried Fawkenner. "What in the name of all the devils is happening now?"

There was a noise of chopping and slithering hoofs behind the wall of mist to the south, but nothing could be seen, though the sounds chinked and clattered onwards at an incredible pace. All stood at gaze, and a waft of wind suddenly sending the fog from Ardura Brae, discovered the steep drove-track there, and three mounted figures on it rushing swiftly downwards. Two were women; the third was a man.

The leading horsewoman—a lady in a blue riding-habit—headed straight for the firing party, and her garron skimmed down the hillside like a deer to where Captain Fawkenner, dumbfounded at the suddenness of these apparitions, stood with hand half-raised long after his first command had been given. He beheld the lady making straight towards himself, but he noted also that she was swaying in her saddle and, not fifty paces from where he stood, she slid heavily to earth under the very feet of her pony.

The group of soldiers stood a trifle dazed at the intrusion and its sequel, and when their prisoner, with the surgeon's instinct, started forward to aid



on Laggan Sands ; all else was still and dream-like. The cold air and the sea's salt tang lent his step a briskness that had long been wanting and he swung rapidly through the dark laurels, for the noise of the drumming waves was like a call of the old ocean to her lover, and a score of seascapes came to the summons. The dark blue leagues of salt water with a following wind and a wave ever breaking in the frigate's waist ; the burning sky of the idle doldrum days withdrawn to heights immeasurable above a sea that glared back to it ; the faintly breezy day with quiet surge and great white clouds on the horizon that always promised home, until the Needles came up and beckoned ; he tasted them all anew.

Yet this was but a surface mood, for somewhere deep down in his spirit was a soreness at the frame of things—at this world so sadly awry ; and dully he wondered if on occasions such as this, some evil humour were in the air, so that, it might be, all men felt at equal hours of the heavy day, this unbearable burden of their lot, this all-pervasive melancholy. It was a wild thought, yet he decided he would boldly probe the matter with the first chance-comer, discovering if he also felt the incubus. But he met no one ; indeed, the place seemed untenanted, for it was late in the afternoon, and the Glenmore hunt had taken most from home.

Whilst he nursed this black mood, a turn in the path brought him suddenly on a lady pacing slowly in the direction he himself was taking. She wore a skirt and riding-coat of dark blue, laced with fine silver lines, and her hat was a tricorne in keeping.

Despite the averted face and up-pinned side-curls he saw her at once for Morag, and as she turned at the sound of his step, he noted with surprise that the quiet eyes were smiling.

"Sir, a good evening," she said. "Is it that you would still play the good Samaritan that I find you here? Is there a new danger?"

"I know of no further peril, madam," said Fraser stiffly, "and I did not expect you. I thought it was at the hare drive you would be found."

"I did but jest," she said.

"'Tis your turn," he answered. "And 'tis mine to give thanks—"

"Ah!" she said, and her face flamed pink. "You mean your escape at Strathcoil? Pray, no more of that; for it were a sermon you gave instead of thanks, if you but saw my motive for the part I played."

"Your motive?" said Fraser quietly. "I know it."

"You cannot—you shall not," she challenged.

"Indeed, you shall not."

"Was it not chiefly a desire to cry 'Quits'—to be even with me for any little service I had rendered you, madam?"

"Oh, a warlock, a warlock!" she cried in affected wonder. "You have it, sir—indeed you have." She was smiling mockingly now.

"And now, since you have paid off what you term your indebtedness to me, you feel you could forgive me anything, madam," he went on.

He could not help pluming himself on his sagacity, even though he felt the humour of the thing, and saw that he had only half the truth. Something

in his face betrayed his satisfaction with himself ; and the next instant he felt she had discovered his vanity in the matter, and was laughing at his efforts to read her.

"Forgive ? Why, yes," she said.

"Even my *bavardage*, Miss MacLean, about Pennyfuaran ?" said he desperately, getting deeper into the toils.

She flashed round on him. "There is a deal too much of Pennyfuaran and Miss MacLean in the air, it seems. Let me tell you, sir, and in one telling, that there is no truth in the story that links those names together."

Fraser halted as if he had been dismissed ; and at sight of his doleful face she softened and said :

"Please you, sir surgeon, do not leave me. I go to see the waters coming in on Laggan Sands, and the approach is rocky. Remember my wrist. Will you not come ? "

He stammered a glad acceptance, and they continued their walk.

"Of course," said the girl, a hint of mischief in her glance, "when Charlie came up with Belle and myself, half-way between Strathcoil and Moy, my first thoughts were for nought but saving the life of a friend. But that was momentary only, believe me : for soon there crept in this alloy ; and ever after it was simply a case of crying 'Quits.' "

The words whipped, but he plodded on, unreplying : it was even as if he welcomed them.

"And again," she went on, "I remember thinking that I had done you the injustice of holding you for a spy. Yet here was the lie to that tale, for you

were risking your life to shield the man you were credited with hunting to the death. And it seemed I might best atone by doing what I did—by coming to help you. . . . But again—” and she shook her head, smiling the while—“that vision was also too fleeting. The essential thought was ‘Quits.’”

Still the surgeon took his drubbing in silence.

“Ah, enough!” she laughed—“enough of this searching of hearts. Like as not there were a-many motives in the business; and at last we ken there’s more than one shuttle goes to the weaving of a tartan, Mr. Fraser. The matter is hardly worth the breath we spend on it, I jalouse.”

He still kept silence. Indeed, although he heard her every syllable, he heeded her railing but little; for her disavowal of any troth with Pennyfuaran, unsought as it had been, seemed to him the only words of any moment, and he paced on, pondering them.

On the other side of the bay, and fronting them, were the headlands of the Laggan country: the little inlet whose shores they sought. But the path led now by rocky defiles between the cliffs and huge stacks of stone, winding in conformity with the landward steeps, so that the approach to the sands was indirect. Half-way, they came to where a spot of scarlet was visible high against a grey background of crag: a mountain-ash in full fruitage.

“The rowans! How lovely!” cried Morag; and then, “Oh, come back, sir! Your arm, sir!” for already her perfervid companion was high among bush and bracken, his sling over his shoulder, as he struggled upwards to the dot of red.

Breathless he came back, laden with a branch, rich in glossy beads of vivid colour.

"How foolish!" she said with smiling lips. "And yet I thank you."

Breathless he was again as he watched her fasten a bunch in the knot of her coat, and look archly up at him as she did so. Then they walked on, and at length the sweep of the track was downwards, and they saw the white sands with the waters pouring in on them. Far out the billows curled, toppling into breakers of dazzling brightness, and these, myriad and incessant, sprawled shorewards and ended in thin lipping crescents of water that hissed into nothingness. They seated themselves in order to look on at this play of the surf. White and cold, the sunshine fell around, on rock, on sand, on wrestling waters, and, oh, so beautifully on the face of the woman beside Ian Fraser. He sat and gazed at that face, while she watched the inrace of the tide; and if there was fascination for her in the eternal mutation of grey water and white foam, for him, too, was there fascination in the play of changing moods on her perfect features. And so it was that as she turned with a sigh such as the vision of something in Nature at once beautiful and terrible may evoke, she met the man's earnest gaze. Her eyes wavered and fell; the faintest flicker of colour rose from cheeks to temples, and a sudden hush seemed to fall on her, so that even the waters' tumult was stilled and all was the profoundest silence in the deeps of her being. But with a flutter as of wings she felt and heard her heart-beats grow and grow, until the whole world was filled with

them, for as she raised her shy glance to the man seated beside her, his hands were around her hands, and his eyes close to her eyes. His silken sling was tenantless now, and she did not speak, but looked at him and at the grey skies and sighed again. He tried to find words, but they failed him ; and thought, too, was lacking. Only was he conscious of the song of the breakers, of her glad eyes, of the pale sunlight. Her eyes, her grey eyes, her glad eyes ! . . . Then the splash of scarlet in the bunch of rowans on her breast burned into his brain, and he found inspiration and voice at once.

“ Pay me,” he said, with husky voice and stammering—“ Pay me a debt as yet unpaid. Pay me for the berries I gave you, Morag. Pay me,” he whispered low, “ with lips as red, as fair.”

And all in a dream and a mist of gold, he saw her face come close, and felt her kiss, and oblivion seemed to fall on him then. But he awoke to the sound of the happy waves and the vision of the happy sunlight. The sea-pyat and the curlew were calling aloud for happiness ; happy, too, the plover’s cry on the bent yonder. Joyously the chariots of white cloud voyaged onwards in the zenith ; and as the lovers leant towards each other, a little wind came from the sea, lifting the hair from their foreheads and sighing “ Peace ” to them before it went inland. Happily rose and fell her bosom ; happily he gazed into eyes of happiness.

Surely the sun would stand still. Surely Time no longer mowed down swathes of space, for here was the beginning of the world and here the world ended. O Life, O Death, show to us the heart of

your mystery, for now have our spirits understanding, and we are wise and strong with the wisdom and strength of gods. Who shall withstand us as we mould old earth anew? We have learned the lesson of love; who shall oppose or sunder? *Ah, Tir-nan-Oig!* The happy sunlight, the happy waves!

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### NORMAN PLAYS HIGH

THE enchantment of that hour at Laggan was not soon to be recalled, for that very evening Fraser had to seek the heather again. The soldiery were once more drawing to Moy, but in business fashion this time, and his only safety seemed that of flight. He went through the Croggan country, lying overnight at Leackruadh, ferried the mouth of Loch Spelve in the morning, and tramped to the Grasspoint change-house.

Had he but arrived an hour earlier he would have met Norman MacLean face to face as he left the inn on another excursion to Moy. Whatever fears of the Sidier Roy that youth had felt, these seemed groundless now; for he footed it blithely by Gleannan Mill and over the moors to Strathcoil as if the country held never a red-coat. Half of the way he journeyed with a horner, and when the poor man turned off at Glenmore he felt shamed at the profusion of thanks Norman gave him for his company. Yet for all his protesting he was at last convinced by this pale-faced young man, that though indeed his poverty was great, he was blessed with such a gift of *ceilidh* as was never before in the world.

"What's one lie or a thousand of them if the man is made happier for a day?" said Norman to himself as they parted. "This night it's king of all the *seanachaidhean* he'll be in his own mind; and I'm never a whit the poorer."



Ever the actor, the born actor, he played his pranks even on the shy Highland lasses he met by the wayside. There was one carrying a cogie of milk from Balure to a sick woman in Seanvaile, and he stopped to ask if she had seen his wife and her maids go past. So circumspectly, indeed, did he describe their garrons and the fashion of their dresses, that for long and long the maid regretted missing the sight of such grandeurs. Her milk he tasted ; and her kindness, oh, her kindness ! how he praised it ! And so the poor girl was left with an opinion of her own graciousness she had never held before, and for some days to come her new-born vanity caused not a few heart-breaks in Balure and Seanvaile.

But when he met Pennyfuaran by the banks of Uisg something warned him to withdraw into himself and lay aside his acting. The look on the face of the chieftain was new to him ; indeed, Norman had never seen him so little susceptible to the influence of his mere presence.

"There is little need of your messages so pressing, if all the news you bring is as wide of the mark as your last," said Pennyfuaran.

"What's amiss ?" said Norman.

"This man, Fraser. Your Tirie journey did you little good to send you so far astray about him," said MacKinnon. And he recounted the surgeon's dealings with Captain Fawkenner at Strathcoil. "Then as for Morag—she is friendlier with him than ever," he concluded bitterly.

"So the man is no spy after all ?" said Norman. "Now, what a fool I've been !" And there was

the very essence of regret and anger in his tone, so that Pennyfuaran could have pitied him. "But who is directing Fawkenner, if it be not he? For direction he must have, to move so close and sure as he does."

"Direction, yes. It's MacQuarie of Inshriff," said Pennyfuaran.

"Ay? MacQuarie?" cried Norman, and his anger was real. "He'll stop at nothing if there's money in't, will MacQuarie. Damn the man and his plotting! He's working years ahead of everyone, as they say hereabouts."

"The toad!" growled MacKinnon.

"The toad, yes, he's all that, for stillness and the dark," said the other. "But this turn it's better speed he'll come: it's the fox he'll be, Pennyfuaran, questing and questing quickly."

They parted then, Norman sending a letter to his sister by the hands of the chieftain.

"The chase is up," said the youth to himself, as Pennyfuaran stalked off on the shore track; "and it's a devil of a handicap MacQuarie has, Norman, my dear, for he's been days on the ground before us. But it's a race worth the running, and it's me that's the dog for *ventre à terre*."

He took the hill above Moy, coming to Glenbyre and waiting impatiently there throughout the short day; and when dark had fallen he was at the rustic bridge in the Castle woods long before his sister had arrived. When she came, it was a new Morag. Radiant her face in the moon's faint light; her voice subdued as if she feared to break the charm that made a new miracle of all the world

since yesterday. Her kiss was strange to him, and he marvelled to see her blush as she gave it. Here was a transformation that perplexed. He might have guessed the truth had not his clever brain on principle distrusted guessing : for his work of espionage had drilled him in the precise lines of deduction from experience even in the smallest affairs. But experience could not help in this, for here was a realm whose ivory gates had never opened to his challenge—a city of dream whose fair streets his shadow would never darken. And so he stood, silent and wondering, before this mystery, a woman whom love had blessed. Yet, perturbed as he was by the sight of this change in Morag, he held by the purpose of his tryst with her, and, before long, broached it.

“So it seems that after all I was wrong in the matter of Mr. Fraser,” he said humbly. “How far astray, none but myself can feel or fathom, Morag ; and at my first meeting with him there shall be full amends.”

“Yes, you were wrong,” she said quietly.

“It was but for Drumfin, I feared ; and now that I find Fraser friendly, I am anxious to have his aid. For but yesterday there came a message from Paris for your exile—one that has never seen pen or ink ; indeed, since it left France it has but travelled from lip to lip ; and now there is no mouth but mine to speak it.”

“Dear Norman, more danger ? ”

“More danger, little sister ; and still and on I’d not have it otherwise, nor would you despite your pleadings. If I but knew Fraser’s hiding I’d soon

persuade him to guide me to Drumfin, I doubt not."

"Is there, indeed, a great danger to Drumfin, Norman, if he do not get your message?" she asked.

"There is a great danger," he repeated, and his voice broke in masterly fashion. "'Tis a matter of life and death," he went on solemnly, "and I love the man—so helpless!"

"Then," said the girl, flushing and speaking with averted face, "I think I can discover some direction to him through Mr. Fraser."

"Ah," he said, watching her closely, a new light in his eager eyes. "You are still friendly with the surgeon? What a little conspirator it is; and all for the sake of a poor old exile?"

"And not at all for the sake of a poor young agent of exiles?" she asked, smiling.

He laughed and gaily kissed her hands.

"There!" he said. "I must lose no time. And yet," he cried suddenly, as if the thought had but come to him, "And yet we should go faster, little sister, if you sent a letter to Mr. Fraser, and your messenger brought back a note of Drumfin's rendezvous with him."

"Indeed, yes; and where were my wits not to see it? At the soonest you shall have Mr. Fraser's answer sent on to Glenbyre, dear Norman."

"Poor Drumfin!" said the youth, half-musing, his voice again tremulous. "Good-night, little one. *Beannachd leat, mo chridhe!*"

They parted. And Callum MacQuarie, crouching far up the woodland path, watched their parting

and cursed them silently, for he would fain have followed both. Finding his spying on Morag the easier course, he turned to his task of shadowing her. He saw the return of the girl to the Castle, some coming and going of Belle, and another appearance of Morag as she stole out to the edge of the pine-wood in which he lay. She hid in the shadows of the great boles and waited : there were few people about, and these servitors mainly ; but with fully a quarter mile of greensward intervening they seemed distant enough, though Morag would have felt them but a hand's breadth off if she stepped into the moonlight.

A little later a tall kilted form swung gracefully across the sands beyond the Castle green, his figure dark against the silver of the loch ; for Pennyfuran had ever an eye for effect, and the sea-wind tossing his plaid on such a night as this, was just the necessary touch of storm which he could have desired. And it was this sense of the picturesque, so strong in him, that kept him to the sea-marge, the dark outline of his lithe figure skirting it longer than was requisite for his detour to where the girl stood in the shade of the woods.

"You're here before me, cousin?" said he. "I trust I have not kept you waiting? I was but on my way to Fawkener when Belle overtook me."

"Captain Fawkener?" asked the girl, shivering. "My cousin in his company?"

He laughed uneasily. "Oh, come!" he said. "We're both army men, you see."

"And yet with a difference, cousin. For you

are friend to Drumfin, whilst he is but the bloodhound on his track."

Pennyfuaran tried to laugh, but failed to carry it off. "Well, I suppose the man's at his work," he said; "he but does his duty, I trust."

"Does he never exceed it?" asked the girl bitterly.

"As for Drumfin—well, has he not the best of aid in this wonderful Mr. Fraser?" said the chieftain.

"Kenneth, is it you that speak? Is it to this your anger is sending you—indifference to this old man's fate? Was he not friend to you and to your father before you?"

"Not that," cried Pennyfuaran. "No treachery to Drumfin, I swear! But," he went on quietly, "there are only Moy and some Campbell women in the Castle to-night, and be Fawkenner harsh or no, at least he's soldier's company."

Morag sighed in relief. "Only that?" she said.

"Only that; and some dice."

"Ah," she said, "then I can ask the service of you that I came to ask."

This confession of the dicing had put the chieftain in good-humour with himself again, and he bowed low. "Your devoted servant," he said.

"Then it's this, sir. Find Mr. Fraser for me. Give him this note, and bring me an answer."

Pennyfuaran went pale, and stepped deeper into the fringe of the pines, moistening his lips feverishly.

"Madam, is it your lover's flunkey you'd make me?" said he. "Oh, beyond all bounds this—beyond all bounds!"

## CHAPTER XXIX

### MACQUARIE'S CARDS

UNWITTING that his part of traitor was known to any, MacQuarie moved openly enough in the daytime among the Moy crofters ; wheedling and flattering he came, all ears for any marketable news in the gossip of the place. And assuredly he lost no time in playing his cards, for on the morning following his eavesdropping, he set to work on the Ruapais. They met on the common grazing ground between the Castle and the village, and MacQuarie opened with a veiled compliment that took the breath from Charlie.

"Well, well, and here is Aros come to Moy at last," said he, smiling. "And your wife will have health, I trust, Mr. MacMorland?"

The Ruapais gasped in delighted amazement. "I did not get a wife yet, master," said he, chuckling nervously. "'Deed no, not yet."

MacQuarie's eyebrows went up, and then he laughed. "My blame, Charlie, but if I did not hear it somewhere, I'm sore mistaken."

"'Deed no, not yet," said Charlie, chuckling anew, and then laughing hollowly in a spasm that brought tears to his eyes.

MacQuarie joined him quietly as though by way of company, his head on one side and his eyes sharp in a watchful regard. There was something intimate, something of a compliment in this unbending

of the tacksman to the gillie, and if Charlie felt gratified at the assumption of him as a married man, he was vastly more so at this union of their souls in vocal mirth.

"Well, well," pursued the man from Inshriff, "if not yet, still 'twill be some day, Charlie, I doubt not. Though it's not me that should be speaking, is it—an old man and a bachelor?"

"'Deed no," said Charlie, still delightedly pondering the thought of conjugal bonds. "'Deed no, not you—not you—MacQuarie—sir."

The tacksman's voice was graver when he next spoke, yet if Charlie had but noted, he would have seen laughter still in the little eyes. "Ay, an old man, Charlie, an old man! And a weary one, forbye; and to speak truth—for it's you I can trust if anyone, Mr. MacMorland—I've the weariest of weary work this very day. What do you think now of a message to a hunted man who may be anywhere in this isle for aught I ken—here the day and awa' the morn, you see?"

"Drumfin?" said the Ruapais, his pouched eyes wide, and his wizened face long. "*Och, ochan!*"

"Ay, Drumfin. And I'm an old man, Charlie, that's what I am," said MacQuarie. And he looked round helplessly on the hills surrounding, as if by chance he might sight the wanderer there. "You'll no can help me, Charlie, can you? And yet it's my very thoughts I'll give you, sir—it's what I was saying to myself was this: 'If Charlie MacMorland can help Drumfin he'll do it, for he never held by any but the Stuarts.' It's nothing but my thoughts I'm telling you, Charlie."



On Charlie's puzzled features a flicker of a vain smile played for an instant. "*Mo thruaigh!*" he said. "What a world! And you've a message for the poor man, and him harried by the red-coats? And you'll not know where he is?"

"What a world!" echoed the tacksman ruefully, and he ruffled his whiskers so as to conceal his mouth with his hand, while he pierced Charlie with his narrowed eyes. "Well, it's what I said to myself I'm but telling you," he went on in tones that implied a frank avowal of his inmost thoughts. "There's Charlie Ruapais," I said, "and there's Belle, and——"

"Belle!" cried Charlie delightedly as in discovery. "Belle will ken; that's it, Belle will do it."

"Well, well," said MacQuarie, "you tell me? Man, man, I wouldna have thought it. Well done, Charlie, say I. And you think Belle will ken? Wonderful!"

"It's just Belle will help us," said the Ruapais, excited and sanguine.

"And Charlie, lad," said the tacksman, sinking his voice to a whisper, while he laid an explanatory forefinger in a frayed buttonhole of the gillie's coat, "if not Belle, then I wouldna say but Mistress Morag would do. She'd be glad and more than glad to help Drumfin, poor man! No, no, not an asking, you see; but Belle could let a wee bittie hint drop, you'll understand." He half closed his ferret eyes, and wagged his head sagely.

More gratified than ever, the Ruapais smiled anew at the vastness of the confidence.

"She's anything but Hanover, you ken," went

on MacQuarie with a sudden broad smile that almost hid his eyes but showed his broken teeth. He rubbed his hands vigorously together, and rocked youthfully, heel-and-toe, well pleased with this conclusion to their plotting.

"I'll see to't, Inshriff, man," said the Ruapais, grinning also. "I'm off at the word."

"Well, well," said MacQuarie, "but it's you that's the smart one, Charlie. Well, well," and he rubbed his hands with infinite zest, as he watched the quaint figure of the gillie depart at the accustomed trot.

It was in this way that the tacksman secured the promise of an interview with Morag ; and the girl, with Drumfin's safety ever in the forefront of her thoughts, deemed it prudent to make the meeting secret. The tryst was for the Castle woods at gloaming, and she took Belle and the Ruapais with her as a precaution against further misadventure.

They hurried from the Castle, just as dark came on, Morag and Belle in front, and the Ruapais fifty paces behind. There was no moon as yet, but a faint starlight shone through the aisles of the woods from a sky cloudless save for one great bar that floated in line with the course of the loch. Inland or seaward the waters were almost soundless, and only the waves of the distant incoming tide chimed feebly to these deeps of the forest, as they crossed the little bridge, and coming round a bend of an avenue, saw MacQuarie walking to and fro in front of them. He was wrapped in an old torn plaid, and a trifle of a swagger was observable in his gait.

Morag turned pale also, and yet she found her voice. "You forget yourself, surely," she answered. "The affair is one of politics and not of sentiment, and concerns Drumfin's welfare deeply. Indeed, and indeed, Pennyfuaran, it is life and death!"

He stood unmoved; his eyes were bright and staring; and a few beads of sweat caught in the meshes of his fair eyebrows, had taken a stray moonbeam and were sparkling eerily.

"You will not believe me?" she said in low rapid tones. "And yet here is Norman, but half an hour gone, begging me to have this done for him. And this is a note to Mr. Fraser asking for Drumfin's rendezvous; for Norman thinks that he will reply more readily to me than to another—since—" her eyes fell—"since the affair at Strathcoil."

"The accident, as Fawkenner names it," said the chieftain sourly.

"As you will," she answered, and went on. "Norman says he has a message for Drumfin of the deepest import, that he alone can convey it, and that but by word of mouth. The very sky will fall, he says, if Drumfin have not the message in time."

Pennyfuaran was silent: he was thinking quickly. Here was news of a truth, but why had he not learnt anything of this from Norman six hours ago. Many things were putting themselves together in his mind; and, as in a vision, he beheld himself and Morag, and Drumfin and Fraser, as but pawns in the hands of Norman. He remembered now the youth's quick heat against MacQuarie when he heard that he also was on the track of Drumfin, and he guessed that here was a move of the most daring

kind to gain a knowledge which would place him far ahead of any rival in the game of the exile's capture. Proof? He had none: and even if he had, here was the man's own sister, pathetic in her faith, and adamant to any evidence against her darling. To refuse her asking were easy, but to cloak the reasons for refusal a task of less facility. Still harder was it to invent on the instant a sham ground of action, and to assume a vice of which he for the moment felt nothing; but he steeled himself to the work and acted the jealous swain to admiration.

"So! The sky will fall?" he asked. "Then let it, for all I care. You'll make no lover's flunkey of me, I tell you."

He went off abruptly towards the village, crossing the greensward with long steps, his plaid's shadow swinging gigantic this way and that; and with a fire of contempt in her grey eyes Morag looked after him; then, nodding her head slowly and decisively, she returned to the Castle.

When she had gone, a man rose from behind a little thicket close by. He had grey whiskers and ferret eyes, and he seemed to smile with his upper lip and nose rather than with his mouth, whilst he twisted his hands round each other, and gazed after the girl. For a little he stood motionless—faun-like and evil in the dark of the pines—and then, silently, furtively, swiftly, bored to the depths of the woods.

it was evident that the stress of some emotion lay heavy on him, and that he controlled himself with an effort.

"Just as I had guessed," he said, eyeing the tacksman contemptuously. "I'd know his voice anywhere, Morag. I've watched all day, little sister, to guard you from something like this : your every movement I've followed, and yet this fellow had almost fooled us. He a friend ! He a Jacobite ! Traitor in one thing, traitor in all, Callum, the blackest of Callums !" He gave MacQuarie a push. "Off, wolf !" he said.

The tacksman's eyes seemed to recede, his figure to crouch to smaller bulk, as he gave way ; then in a sudden movement, he craned forward, shaking with passion suppressed, a forefinger pointing at Norman.

"And every word a true one, eh ? " he sneered. "Every word a truth of the whitest, Miss Morag ? It's me that's the poor man scheming to make a penny by selling the news of the countryside, eh ? Well, then, let it be so : let me make a clean breast of it." He twined his fingers savagely around each other. "Hear Callum MacQuarie now," he went on. "Well, I did mislead you—that I'll confess—and there was no message from Dunkirk. And after all that, I doubt not, it's a spy Mr. Norman would be calling me ? "

As much astonished by the fact of his recognition by MacQuarie as by his avowal of deceit, young MacLean hesitated for a reply. Then he laughed half-heartedly.

"Spy ? " he said. "Why, yes."

"Well, well, wonderful," said the tacksman, sidling near, his head to one side and his voice very gentle now. "And your own name will be—what?—will be what, sir?" He smiled and shook his head as in reproof. "Oh, yes," he said softly and sadly, "just spy also—yes, just spy, Mr. Norman."

The youth retired before the close-pressed face of the old man, feeling that the brain behind those ferret eyes was master of cunning he had never sounded. He feared, too, the dusk of anger, creeping up over the high cheek-bones.

"Spy—just spy," said the tacksman in louder tones, "and a worse than the poor farmer in Inshriff. . . . Your very brother, Miss Morag,—oh, yes, your own brother—and yet a thing unclean! . . . God! I work crooked, but I never held the secret counsels of the Prince only to betray them; I had no hand in procuring the slaughter of Chisholm because he stood in the way of some blood-money in Tiree; and if I set myself to the death-hunt of Drumfin, my own father was never his bosom-friend, and my own sister like a daughter to him."

Norman drew off as if he had been slashed across the face.

"Lies, lies," he muttered, and silently fell back to where the pine's shadows were blackest.

Morag saw the movement, and putting her hand on the youth's shoulder she led him into the open and the starshine. Her gaze was steady on the face of her brother, but his lowered lids never lifted; there was only the faintest flicker, and still they kept

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE LETTER

As soon as a bend in the path had lent an added safety to that of the gathering dark, MacQuarie hurried his pace, his fingers clutching the prize he had won, Morag's note to Fraser, unspoiled and untorn. He reached a glade where the light of the moon, now rising, was sufficient to allow of his deciphering the writing; and unsealing the paper, he read greedily. There were only a few hasty lines from Morag asking Drumfin's whereabouts, and pathetically insisting that the exile's safety depended on an immediate answer, but to the tacksman the writing seemed incomparably full of humour, for he doubled up swiftly in a fit of silent laughter. Then he turned to a bypath leading to the hill-tracks and made for home.

It was an hour past midnight when he entered the great kitchen at Inshriff, and lit a lantern. He plied the fire afresh, and heating a knife-blade, roughly sealed the letter anew, then sat down to warm himself at the peats and ponder his good-fortune. His musings ended in his knocking loudly at a door on the other side of the kitchen, and in a little this opened, showing a steep flight of wooden steps, a pair of stockinged feet on them, and the owner of the feet descending. This was a man of middle age, whose apple-red cheeks and dark beard lent him a frank look that was not

borne out by the sly glance of his eye. He walked a trifle in-kneed, and slouched forwards, smiling apologetically.

"It's just a nap I was taking, brother," he said. " 'Tis but this minute I lay down."

It pleased Callum to return the smile, and instantly the younger man's eyes were alert. Something of importance was surely astir, when the brother was so kindly.

"You'll need more than stockings, Murdo," said Callum, looking at the other's feet. "I have a letter for Grasspoint."

"To-night, brother?"

"Yes; and you'll be wise if you make as much as you can of the moon."

Murdo sat down obediently on a bench and drew a pair of brogues from under it.

"No matter," he said. "I've had a good sleep, and a waking before the dawn is what I'm used to."

"Tush!" snarled Callum of a sudden. "Have a guard of your tongue, or stay at home. . . . Man, man, it's only a moment ago that you told me you had but lain down. If that's all your skill, I'd better send the herd."

"There now, there now, who's your match for quickness in the uptake?" said the other, cringing.

Callum took out Morag's letter and handed it to his brother. "This note is for Mr. Ian Fraser at the Inn of the Grasspoint, you'll observe, and for no other. And the answer is from Mr. Ian Fraser at the Inn of the Grasspoint, and from no other, mind you. See you get it, man. You'll put on an



## CHAPTER XXXI

### PERPLEXITY

**CALLUM MACQUARIE** was right in his surmise : **Fraser** had decided to answer the letter in person, despite the danger from the continued stay of **Fawkenner** and his men at **Moy**. He moved with caution, however, going by **Croggan** and **Laggan**, and circling back through the woods to the banks of **Uisg**, where he waited for nightfall. He had hoped to sight the **Ruapais** or some gillie from **Moy Tower**, who would take a message to **Morag** informing her of his return, but he found neither.

The evening airs were raw : it irked him this game of waiting in the cold and the dark, and at last as the night wore on, and a half-moon climbed the sky, he ventured nearer the Castle. With light steps and drumming heart he came down the pathway that pierced the belt of oaks and sycamores to reach the little bridge of logs. And, just as on a former night, he was brought suddenly into view of two familiar figures pacing slowly towards him : the woman silent, but the accents of the man's voice speaking contrition, remorse, assurance. The moon shone so clearly through the thin-leaved trees that he saw the kilt and plaid under the cloak of the cavalier, and noted the moon-rays reflected from a crystal set in the black knife handle close to a bare knee. But now the lady and her companion had caught sight of the intruder and had stopped in

their walk, in order to scan him the more closely. The surgeon did not pause, however ; with the same swift step, the same throbbing heart, as on that former night, he went on ; yet now he did not flee, and his gaze held the woman still as a pillar of salt, while the cavalier disappeared crashing through the shrubberies.

Something took Fraser by the throat just then, and a dizziness assailed him, as he rushed blindly forward. Yet his wrath, his jealousy, were as driven mists when he saw Morag's eyes brim with unshed tears, and her hands go out to his in a little helpless movement.

"Who is this man ? " he asked.

She only sighed.

"Who ? " he repeated, and of a sudden his pulses beat faint and small.

"You must not ask," she said brokenly. "I may not tell."

He dropped her hands and caught at an oak-branch unsteadily, and his heart was now hammering indignantly, painfully, as if some unjust thing held it checked.

"Ah, madam," he said bitter and low, "there is need for neither 'may' nor 'must,' for I can answer the question myself. He is the same you met on the night of Moy dance ? "

She started at that, but was silent, and her look was downwards, as he took her hand again.

"Madam, it was the same ? " he persisted.

"It was."

"And yet at Laggan Sands you had nothing but scorn for the gossip that linked your name with

Pennyfuaran's ? Faith ! what a comedy, madam ; and what a part I play ! ”

He swung her hands apart, but did not release them ; and, distracted, the girl strove to set them free. Not a tear would fall ; she could not even sob ; her thoughts were all a-tangle. Two days ago it had been easy to acknowledge the stranger as her brother ; but now that she knew of all his treachery, her shame seemed overwhelming. So much to do, so much to undo—alone in this worst of confusions, it was not strange if she kept silence. And still, Fraser held her hands and looked down on her.

“ I had your letter,” he said quietly, savagely. “ The answer seemed safe only if I brought it in person, and so I came. I am glad I came. For where troth is held so light, confidences had best be few, or none at all—or none at all.”

“ A letter ? ” she said, amazed.

“ This,” said Fraser, releasing her hands at last, and drawing out the triangle of paper. “ This, asking my rendezvous with Drumfin. It is your hand ? ”

“ It is my hand,” she faltered, “ but I did not send it.”

“ You wrote it ; yet you did not send it ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You will surely tell me why, madam ; for this concerns the safety of my friend, Drumfin, does it not ? Or is this also among the mysteries in which you deal nowadays ? ”

“ There is nothing further to be said,” she answered, her arms straight by her side, her eyes downcast.

“ Ah ! there is—there must be ! ” he cried, for something in her bearing had touched him, and now his voice was all faith and tenderness. “ What is it, Morag ? ”

She shook her head sadly, and for the first time that evening a smile played on her lips—a little pitiful smile it was ; yet when he saw it he breathed deep as in relief, and his eyes tried to read her eyes unfathomable. For reply she only shook her head again, and turned off on the homeward path without a word.

Fraser followed some paces behind until he saw her safely at the fringe of pines bordering the greensward before the Tower. Here he paused ; and she went out alone into the moonlight’s pure austerity—a quiet drooping figure in a sober-coloured cloak and hood. He watched her eagerly, yet there was never a good-bye nor a turning of the head from her, and indignantly he wheeled, going back the way he had come.

But he had barely taken twenty paces when he heard the sound of light running footsteps, and looking round, he beheld the girl returning. As she ran one of her fair side-curls tossed over her eyes—eyes that danced like stars in the wave—and a high colour flushed her cheeks. She halted beside him and taking a bunch of rowans from her waist, broke it in two, and shyly proffered him one of these lesser sprays. He hesitated for an instant, then took the berries, and as he did so, her eyes again lightened magically, and she smiled on him, her face transformed. Then she went swiftly away.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### DEAF ALAN

FOR a full day after his failure MacQuarie sat over the peats in Inshriff kitchen, blinking his cunning eyes, warming his writhing hands, cosy in deep communion with himself; and the more he felt the keenness of defeat, the more he felt the power of resources still untried. Let him wait, let him wait! a way would yet appear. Mentally he took up each puppet in the game, and regarded him intently for a time, testing this relation and that to another of the pieces on the board, and becoming surer of his skill, as he felt the zest of the trials he essayed. And all the while, Murdo kept in the background, fawning in perpetual apology if the elder brother's eye but fell on him.

At last with a little purr of delight, Callum's face lightened—the vision had come. "If it's not me that's to snare Drumfin, at least I'll make sure that the other man does no trapping," said he, as he rose, his hands rubbing each other in a final twist of congratulation.

"Murdo?" he called.

"Ay, brother, ay. Coming, brother, coming."

"I'm for Rhoail, and I'll take the dun pony."

"Rhoail? Blessing on you, man, do you ken who's there?"

"See you that now? Do I ken who's there?" asked Callum in cold tones, the ferret eyes searching

his brother contemptuously from under pent brows. He went as far as the porch, and turned slowly to regard the other from head to foot. "Do I ken who's there?" he snarled, and slammed the door behind him.

The afternoon was wet and cold, and the rain-bursts swept in long trails down the Glenmore valley from the west, obscuring and revealing by turns every contour of the hills, every winding of the river and its lochans. It was in one of the breaks of these vapours that the Ruapais—whom Morag had set on watch—perched high among the bracken of a little cliffy shelter above Inshriff, was aware of the near presence of a man leading a pony out of the sopping mists on the shoulder of the hill and making for Glenforsa. The man's head was hid under a fold of ragged plaid, and turned away from Charlie, but the swinging of the fellow's shoulders seemed familiar. The bridle of his garron hung on his left arm, and he sheltered under the lee of the beast's head; yet from where he lay the Ruapais saw that the man's hands engaged themselves in a mutual wriggle that implied the reflective mind, and forthwith he recognised the stranger for his prey. He sighed reluctantly, however, for the lair he left was dry and warm, and as the mist drew closer between Ben Talla and Ben Vearnach, he must needs follow in a proximity that was hardly safe from discovery; and nearer he came and nearer, until he was but fifty yards from the figures of MacQuarie and his garron, ghostly and magnified in the fine spray of the fog. But as the rising ground was crossed, Glenforsa

appeared clear of mist ; and the tacksman, mounting his pony, drew further off, Charlie watching his movements curiously the while, as he followed him down the riverside.

"It's Ben Veon he's aiming at," said the little man. "What can he want there? Oh, Rhoail, of course! . . . My sorrow! if only the rain would come again till nightfall at least."

As if in answer to his wish, the mists came once more, stealing and sweeping down the strath in folds that lagged on earth and scurried in the heavens ; and soon came gloaming also, so that the Ruapais' approach to the hay-tramp close to the little house of Rhoail was accomplished unperceived. Here he saw MacQuarie greet a stout man clad in a cloak of many capes and, after stabling his mount, enter a doorway, belching peat-reek in volumes blue and pungent. The door was left ajar, and presently there came from it a noise of shouting that sent the little gillie into a sweat of fear.

"God shield me!" said he, "that's Deaf Alan, I'll wager. My sorrow! I wish I were nearer home. But here's at them. . . . Poor Charlie!"

Coming up to the doorway, he peered cautiously in, but seeing nothing because of the smoke, he crawled to a gable-end, and by means of a pile of wet peats climbed to the opening in the soaking thatch which served for chimney. The evening light slanted through the gap, marking out from the surrounding shadow the smouldering peats, and the dim figures of two men crouching over them—MacQuarie and Deaf Alan.

"All," said the unfrocked minister in Gaelic,

“all. They’ve gone to taste a new still at Gaodhail, and by this time it’s beasts they’ll be making of themselves.”

He spoke in a soft voice, hissing his sibilants markedly, ducking his head in a deferential way; and the pouched lower eyelids, the flabby cheeks, the vacant look, gave the man a guileless air. “Yes, yes, quite alone. It’s for hours we’ll be undisturbed, I’ll venture. Oh, yes!”

MacQuarie ducked and bowed in return, a smile that was almost imbecile in its bland good-humour gathering his features into a group of which the little twinkling eyes were chief. Then he slapped his steaming knees, and bent forward, his hand shaping itself into a trumpet around his mouth.

“In confidence—you understand—all this,” he cried in a loud voice, and sank back smiling and nodding his head reassuringly, as if his exertions required excuse.

But the heavy face of the cleric remained unmoved, and his musing gaze at his shoe-buckles brought a trace of irritation to mingle with the wavering smile on Callum’s lips.

“*Direach sin!*” said Alan at last. “In confidence, of course.” He nodded his head in all solemnity, as if a communication of the gravest had been made, and drew himself up with a little movement of importance.

“It’s about a matter in which you have some interest,” said the tacksman loudly.

Alan nodded, frowning omnisciently, and combing his little beard with his fingers. His sleepy eyes seemed to have become suddenly half-awake.



"Indeed, and it's you that has an interest in it," went on Callum, putting his hands' palms together between his knees and swaying from side to side, well pleased with himself.

The deaf minister bowed again without a word. His eyes were changing for they were fully awake now, and the pupils seemed wider than formerly.

"And more—it's a matter of news you'd even be willing to pay for," said MacQuarie.

Alan was suddenly deaf in earnest; his look was of the blankest. "Ah," he said.

"Pay for—news—worth paying for," shouted the tacksman.

"Ah," said Alan, nodding. "Cattle?"

"No," cried MacQuarie, very red about the neck, and his ferret eyes flashing. "News—worth paying for.—Mine——" He tapped his breast.

Alan shook his head helplessly.

"It's about Chisholm," said Callum.

The deaf man bent forward eagerly. "Alasdair Dhu who died by the knife in Tíree?" he asked, the words tripping each other, so great was his haste.

"The same, master. One of his slayers is here; and for ten pounds I'll put the name of his hiding in your ears."

"Here is the money," said Alan instantly, his pupils wider and blacker than ever. He drew forth a dirk from his oxter, and held it towards MacQuarie, as if asking his opinion of the blade.

The tacksman regarded it quietly, for he knew his man and had expected as much.

"Queer money that," said he.

"It will be of the best," said Alan with conviction. And they searched each other's faces in silence for a little.

"Well, well," sighed MacQuarie at last. "It will not be Angus MacLean that I know of," he said.

"No?" said the minister, testing the tip of his dirk with his thumb.

"And it is not Fraser."

"No?"

"But it is Cattanach," said Callum, with a slap on his knee.

"Ah," said Alan. "Who is this Cattanach now? Has he not more than one name?"

"I know nothing of that," lied the tacksman glibly.

"Where is he?" asked Alan.

"In one of two places: Glenbyre or Craig; it was Craig these last two nights. Get your men ready, I say."

"Get them sober, the brats!" said the minister. He sheathed his knife with a smack, and rose to his feet alertly, his eyes glowing. "We cannot move before Monday, for even if the drink has left them by to-morrow, it's a Sabbath, you see."

"Too good a day for a killing?" sneered MacQuarie, with a furtive look in his little eyes. "Who's to ken?"

The fat cleric eyed him solemnly and his paunch shook as he shivered in an access of emotion, while he raised the half-closed eyes of a fanatic to the rafters. "I ken," he said quietly and fiercely—"I—and my Maker."

"Well, well," said MacQuarie, surprised into an admiring glance at this transport. "Blessing

on you for a queer mixture, Alan MacMaster MacLean." He rose to his feet. "Good-night ! Blessing on you ! "

"Good-night ! Blessing on you ! " said the other absently, for he was already preoccupied with his thoughts of vengeance.

The tacksman stole out through the gloom to the stable. But long before he emerged from it leading his garron, the Ruapais was speeding ahead of him through heather and gall, in a darkness that was unfogged and starlit, his queer little mind guessing wildly at many things, his odd little heart beating strangely in the hope of service to his mistress—as intent on his task as any old-time knight performing in all reverence his lady's devoir.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE CLACHAIG PASS

It was Sunday before the Ruapais brought his news to Morag, and she instantly despatched two piteous little notes by his hands, one to Pennyfuaran, and one to the surgeon.

*"How to write,"* ran her letter to Fraser, *"how to tell you all: for the time is short, and the Danger great. But my Brother is in Peril from the Sunivaig MacLeans, and not a soldier in the Isle to say 'Stand you now,' for all the Companies have gone to the main Land. And I have not spoken of the Business to Moy or his people, for there are Matters in it that confuse it mightily. 'Twas none other than my Brother you saw accompany me in the woods but two nights ago—and O, sir, I'll warrant that you ken as well as his poor Sister why Deaf Alan has his Track.*

*"I have sent Pennyfuaran to Glenbyre lest Norman should lie at that place. His other Hiding is Craig; and will you not, O, sir,—for his Sister's sake—seek him there, and warn with all Speed. But I am come into a Flurry of Mind and can venture No More. Assure yourself that I am Your faithful Servant.*

*"M.M."*

It was Monday, however, ere the Ruapais discovered Fraser's direction at Grasspoint Inn and coming there with the note found that the surgeon had gone north towards Aros that very afternoon. Like a sleuth-hound the little gillie panted after,

and came up with, the traveller near Tigh-ban just as evening fell.

And thus it was that as on a former night Fraser found himself on the hills above Aros and making for Craig. Yet now it was to no happy tryst with Morag he looked forward, rather to a meeting with a man whom of all men he would have avoided. Because of the Sunivaig folk at Rhoail, Charlie had advised his taking another route than Glenforsa and so he crept onwards in the dark and the rain on the shoulder of Torlochan, and made for Maam Clachaig.

It was slow work as he slipped on the heather roots and the runnelled earth below their tough fibres, but coming to the lower slopes, he struck the drovers' track running straight for Loch-na-Keal, and stepped out briskly. When he reached the bridge of pine-logs over the stream of the Ba, he found the river swinging seawards in full spate, brimming from bank to brae. There was something sinister in the silence of its might, as it swept on heavily, speedily, steadily, as noiseless and gentle as it was powerful, and he fell to wondering if the next burn were bridged or not. It was too dark to allow of his consulting his map, but he heard afar the distant drumming of falling water and guessed it for that of a hill-torrent, not an uncanny stilly stream like this.

He crossed this new burn in a little with nothing worse than a wetting to his waist, and now he marched with the black sheet of Loch Ba on his left, a ghostly company of herded hills surrounding

Yon would be the House of Gruline close to the

shore, the manifold lights reflected from the murky waters of the lake. Midnight was past, he meditated, and yet they were awake yonder—the tapers lit, the fire roaring on the hearth, the punch-jug busy, the cards carpetting the floor. But no, it was kindlier even than that, for high and thin there wafted to him the skirl of the pipes and the call of the dancers. He halted for a moment to listen; then, shivering in the gowsty night, he plodded wearily forwards, and still and on a little laugh escaped him, for was he not as happy in the dark here as any in the warmth and light yonder, because the woman of his choice had trusted him?

Two miles more, and he came through the birches of Coille-na-Sroine, and over the long wet grasses of the slopes of Clachaig to where a spectral grey cottage with a single litten window stood high on the hill above him.

“Here also they are late of bedding,” said Fraser to himself. “A cow calving, or a death-wake, surely?”

Between him and the house a torrent swashed and burred; the track went down to it, and in the uncertain light that held only a hint of dawn he saw a stepping-stone on the further side. But against the hither shore the water swirled furious, and no boulders could be seen; so for a space he groped up and down over rock and sand; and then, impatient, blindly essayed to ford. The chill and rush of the pouring waters about his middle, the sound of a sudden squall roaring among the trees of the corrie above, the dim forms of the giant hills shouldering down on him from every side—all these

combined to fashion a horror that gat hold of his soul as he lost foothold and was swept into a pool below the crossing ; and an involuntary cry, strident and inhuman, went up from him into the night. But the shock of his fall chased the child from his spirit, and when he crawled up the bank on the Clachaig side he was himself again.

As he rose to his feet and turned in the direction of the cottage, he noted another light besides that of the window, for now the doorway stood open, and a fan of yellow radiance fell outwards from it on the grassy slope. He took a step or two forward, and as he did so a figure dashed from the house and ran clattering up the glen, the pebbles of the drove-road skidding from the flying feet. Amazed, the surgeon paused and listened to the beat of footsteps, steady and rapid, dying gradually into the heart of the night. Doubtless his cry of fear had alarmed someone. When next he looked up the door was closed, and he hesitated as to whether or no he should go up to the cottage. His goal lay farther on, and there was no need for a call here ; but, nevertheless, more as an atonement for the coward cry in the torrent than for aught else, he advanced up the hill and knocked at the door of the tiny house.

It was open in a flash, and a young Highlander, big-boned and tall, stood before him, the black knife ready in his hand. Behind was a young woman, one arm holding a bairn asleep on the shoulder, the other upraised with a lighted cruisie.

"*Co tha sin ?*" asked the man, ready to fall on this dark eerie figure, whose cloak glistened with dropping water at every tag.

"Ian Fraser on the way to Craig," said the surgeon.

"Then come in, even if you've a man's head under your arm," said the Highlander, and he stuck his knife in his stocking and turned hospitably inward, Fraser following.

"We are MacLeans from Tiree," continued the cottar, "and here but a few years." He kicked two collies from the hearth-front, and drew forward a stool for the stranger. "Neither kith nor kin to the Frasers, but owing them a debt all the same, I'm thinking. Give me your cloak, for I see you've been in the burn. It's the whisky he'll be needing, wife."

The round-faced bairn waked good-naturedly to play with his father, while the woman stirred a *cuach* of whisky-gruel.

"MacLeans of Tiree? Not of Sunivaig?" asked Fraser.

"God forbid!" said the man fervently. "We're Crossapoll."

"So you owe the Frasers a service?" said the surgeon, steaming stockings and shoes at the red of the peats. "Now, I wonder what?"

"Ay, but for all it was great, it's a kindness that I canna speak of," said the Highlander. "It was done to one of whom you'll never have heard—to judge by your Southron tongue—one Angus MacLean, tacksman in Craigmores. I'll say no further." He dandled the bairn on his knee, and added with a look of good-humour in his eyes: "It's well the teeth are before the tongue, as we say in the Gaelic."



Fraser unreplying, nursed his lame arm for a little, and his host observing it, condoled with him.

"An ill thing an injured arm to cross the Maam with, the going is so steep. But you're not the first has climbed it in the night-time and in a hurry. . . . My faith ! but you're wet, sir. And if you werena gentry, it's a change of clothes I'd be offering you."

"Here's the main thing to keep dry," said the surgeon, taking out a heavy pistol young Moy had given him some time before, and examining it. He found that the weapon had escaped soaking ; nevertheless he recharged before returning it to the belt below his vest-flap. "That's of more import hereabouts, I'll wager, than water-tight shoes," said he.

"Faith ! It's the true word you have ! " said the big fellow, looking uncomfortable.

"You sit late, your wife and you," went on Fraser, the toddy-gruel loosening his tongue. "Did I not dislodge someone from your house when I cried out in my fall ? "

The hillman eyed him gloomily, dwelling long on the stiff right arm, and the bulge over the waist-coat where the pistol lay, and the good-natured look faded wholly from the lean face.

"As the saying goes," he said dourly, "it's a big word the mouth canna hold. Here is food and fire and light ; but for all your name of Fraser, I'll be glad to see your going, if your tongue is so full of life."

By this time there was evidently hostility also in the young wife's face as she walked up and down restlessly, the bairn asleep on her shoulder. Her black looks were rapidly infecting her husband, and

he would have followed with still ruder words, had not Fraser risen, said good-bye, and taken the high road once more. Already the dawn-light was coming clear and grey, and looking back at the cottars, before he entered the next clump of trees, he saw them moody and silent, eyeing him distrustfully, the only hearty one in the group, the child once more awake and crowing in his mother's arms.

"Here's a ploy," said Fraser. "Smugglers, I doubt not."

There was another stream to cross and then the track zigzagged steeply up a cliff-face by means of the scree and rubble of centuries sloped across it from the flanks of Corraven. Westwards, the cliff ran in a stony spine to join the purple-black ridges, where, through films of mist Ben More upsprang in might, austere and sovran in the dawn. This was the valley-head, closed as by a wall of rock; and looking back in the dim morning light, Fraser saw Glen Clachaig scooped clean and fair to Loch Ba, its trees dwarfs, its river a ribbon of silver. He sat down to rest when half-way up the ascent, and prosaically enough sat to checking his bearings by means of his tattered map; then returning the papers to his vest-pocket, his left hand, somewhat awkward at the duties of his stiffened right, did its work so clumsily as to knock from his belt the pistol he had primed at the cottage.

It exploded as it fell, and there was an instant shattering of echoes on all sides, prolonging and terrifying. But ere they had died there came another report, and a bullet hit the boulder on which he sat, while the echoes ripped and ripped

again. Fraser glanced sharply at the rim of the cliff above, then crouched with a swift movement behind a mass of detached rock ; and as he did so his foot touched the fallen weapon over the path-edge, and it rattled far below in a small avalanche of grit. He bit his lip, for fifty paces were all he lacked of gaining the summit of the pass, and here was a barring of the way to some purpose. Yet his resolution was soon formed ; for without a firearm, no course lay open but close quarters, and scrambling to his feet, he had rushed two of the serpentine turns in the path, before the next shot was fired. It also missed, and the echoes still mocked the marksman, when Fraser reached the last ridge, and saw him for a dark and tousled figure of a man, who suddenly flitted behind a great cairn some twenty yards off.

The surgeon's one thought as he emerged on the new country over the hill-top was the handicap of his stiffened arm, and at a glance he had marked the only place of shelter from further pistol-fire. For on this side the land fell gently away in moorland, and in its midst were the beginnings of a little glen, down either side of which went a division of the drovers' track marked by a cairn. Behind one cairn was his adversary, and forty paces off the other proffered safety to himself. But as he hesitated the hidden enemy's pistol spat out again angrily, and seeing his only hope was at still closer quarters, Fraser rushed for the source of fire. At the very start of his onset, he stumbled in a peat-hole and fell face forwards at the cairn's base, jarring his doubled right arm horribly, just as the dark mass

of his assailant hurled itself on him, and a knife fleshed his shoulder. Yet the fellow drew off instantly as if in self-defence, and in that moment's breathing-space the surgeon had time to roll on his side and swing his leg in a savage hack against his opponent's shins. The man toppled downwards, and Fraser holding out his knife at the length of his left arm, received his opponent's breast full on it. Then as the slack body crushed down on him, he fainted slowly.

He felt as if ages had passed before he came to himself, yet the sky was still heavily grey, and the sun had not yet risen. As his shoulder twinged he recalled the fight dreamily, and rising to his elbow, stiff and cold and weak, he beheld his opponent crouching at the foot of the cairn. He was intent on some papers he had spread on his knees, but at the noise of Fraser's movement he glanced up, and rose to his feet hurriedly.

“Ah,” he said, coming near. “As I thought. 'Twas but a fainting fit, *mon médecin* ?”

“Cattanach !” cried the surgeon at sight of the familiar pallid features.

“And you ?” said the youth smiling. “And you, my dear Fraser ? The surprise almost exceeds the pleasure ! I had no idea your leave was so extended, sir.”

Fraser still too astounded to answer, could do naught but stare at the dishevelled figure Norman now presented, for he was dressed in some ragged odds and ends of attire, and looked as if he had but escaped from Bedlam.

“You pardon the *déshabillé*, do you not, my dear

Fraser? 'Tis only one of my few disguises. . . . But confide in me, I beg of you, the name of the maker of the knife you use, for I shall ever remember him in my infrequent prayers. Indeed, had it not snapped like the trash it was, my account were ended, sir. Nay, nay, don't trouble to rise. My steel was good; your wound deep, and hence the fainting, is it not, my surgeon?"

Fraser moistened dry lips as the man babbled on.

"May I ask your business in this wilderness?" continued Norman.

"I sought—you!" gasped Fraser feebly.

"So? And why?"

"To warn you. . . . Your sister sent me. The Sunivaig men know of your hiding at Craig, and are on your track."

For a second the hard pale features of the youth softened, but for a second only; then he laughed shrilly.

"Admirably done," he said.

"You will not believe me?" said Fraser again.

"Admirable, admirable," chuckled the youth, shaking his head in a negative there was no misunderstanding.

"Her letter is here," protested the surgeon. "Read it, I beg of you. Your danger is great, I tell you."

"There is no letter, *mon médecin*," said Norman, still smiling reproof. "Here are your papers," and he showered the packets over the recumbent figure.

"My papers?" cried Fraser in angry surprise.

"Your papers, sir—from the breast of your coat,

to be precise. . . . It is permitted, is it not ? ” smiled the other. “ A privilege of the conqueror always, I believe ? ”

Fraser bit his lip. “ There is no letter from your sister ? ” he asked.

“ None ! ”

And so it was. Everything was there—map, notes, bills ; but the one thing of importance for the occasion was lacking, and whether it had been lost in the torrent or on the cliff-face mattered nothing now.

“ You are persuaded ? ” asked Norman, cynically polite, seating himself on an outcropping rock, and looking down on the other. Fraser, unanswering, turned on him an eye of loathing, and the youth caught the glance.

“ There it is, that look again ! ” he cried. “ Man, I’ve forgotten much but never yon turning of your eyes on me, just before we foundered in Aros Bay. And I’ve never forgiven it either, my surgeon.”

Fraser closed his eyes to shut out the sight of this creature, for at last it was borne in on his brain, dulled though it was by the pain of his wound, that despite Morag’s agonies of entreaty, despite his own pledges, this man was still the same he had known in Tiree, as evil, as treacherous.

“ Listen,” said Norman’s cold voice, and now there was a new note of exultation in it. “ Listen—whilst I give you a message that is not a lie, my friend—a message for your comrade, Drumfin, when next you see him. Tell him, my worthy courier, that I had news from Paris yesterday ; tell him

that Conflans' fleet is broken and flying, and the great rising of 'Fifty-nine' as dead as the 'Forty-five.' And tell him also, I beg of you, who burst the bubble—myself and Pickle and the despised Bas-Ondulé—poor spies all of us: but with an achievement—an achievement, sir, to our names at last." He rose to bow mock-heroically. "Tell him also that I no longer pursue the chase of game as small as Drumfin—'twould be unambitious after Conflans, would it not?—but that I advise he seek the Rue Roquette as early as he can, for there will be many trustys in old Scotland before a week is past, believe me."

Fraser tossed on his side, as if to get beyond earshot of his tormentor, and stung by the contempt implied in the action, the renegade lost his cynical coolness, and in a sudden blind fury, struck with the scabbard of his hanger again and again at the prostrate man's wounded shoulder.

The surgeon could have filled every glen and corrie with his shrieks, had his bitten lip, his clenching teeth allowed, for the agonies of the poor battered wound pierced him to the marrow, and at last in a supreme effort to escape that amazed them both, he found his feet, and fronted the torturer unsteadily. Norman's face became contorted at the sight, and drawing his sword he backed to the cairn, while with a little staggering run, Fraser came after. A second knife from his belt had found its way into his hand in some subconscious fashion, and his eyes stared hate of the deadliest. But suddenly he halted, and eyed the weapon.

"No, no," he muttered thickly. "Morag, Morag!" and he tossed the knife far from him.

He saw it glitter in the dawnlight; he heard it clatter on the rocks; he felt the shock of combat, and knew his enemy had closed with him. Then they crashed to earth together, and the rest was blackness.

How long it was before he again felt consciousness and pain pour round him like a tide, he never knew; but when he opened his eyes, a trembling opal radiance in the sky bespoke the coming of day at last from behind the black crags in the east. From the sky his gaze came to earth, and turning his head he saw, close to his cheek, the shoes of a man who lay supine and motionless. He eyed the figure in sick horror, and crawling nearer beheld the face of Norman MacLean. The spy lay still as a waxen image, and the surgeon saw at a glance that he was dead. . . . Could killing a man be so simple a matter? . . . There was a knife in his breast, and at sight of it he felt anew the wild-beast passion of the combat; again the blood flushed his brain to madness, and he tottered to his feet to look around for fresh foes.

Then with the regress of his emotion, he came to himself, and his thoughts ran clear. . . . How cold the grey sky empty of birds! How vast the earth untenanted by any living thing! How slow the break of day! Would the sun never rise? . . . How blind his rage to have done this thing! And in sight of this cold clay what a mockery that casting-away of his knife! . . . He had killed a man! . . . He had killed . . . Oh, Morag, Morag!



These and these only were his thoughts, repeated, repeated, as he drew nearer the dead man, huddled and horrible, and looked down on him. Here was the quarry of the Sunivaig clansmen ; here was the man he would have shielded from death ; here was the brother of the woman he loved, come to the dark ferry by this most tragic of roads.

Moodily he stood, pondering. Then, his decision taken as he marked a raven slowly winging down the little glen, he scraped a rude hollow with his hands by the base of the cairn, folded his cloak around the body, and dragged it with difficulty to its resting-place. A covering of stones was next lightly made, but strongly, too, for the raven had returned with his mate, and they were now circling high above the grave. To-morrow, or to-night it might be, the Aros folks would send, and the home-coming of Norman MacLean would be on a bier. But for the present, fitly guarded and fitly placed was the grave on this lone mountain-side, thought Fraser, as, clutching his wounded shoulder, he came slowly back to the descent on the Clachaig side of the pass ; for even if the Sunivaig men should chance this way, surely the clansmen would be far to seek who would desecrate a foeman's burial-place set amid such solemnity of hill and sky, keened over by the winds from dark Corraven, enfolded by the weeping mists of gaunt Ben More.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE WOMAN ANSWERS

HE fainted once again before he came to Clachaig, but recovered after a time and went on. The cottar and his wife were in consternation to find the strange visitant of the previous night—the man who had come in the dark, dripping from the torrent's bed—return in the daytime, blood-stained and tottering, and Fraser saw that they suspected an encounter with the traveller they had harboured before his arrival. But since they seemed as desirous as himself of avoiding the matter, he bound up his wound in silence, drank some spirits, and set off for Aros.

So great was his weakness, however, that he had to halt overnight at Killiechronan township, and thence he sent a message to Ulva House, the rendezvous Drumfin had given him at their hurried parting at Gribun. By morning light the old Jacobite had come and Fraser had told him the whole sad story.

"And you would have gone on to his father with this tale of death? You?" said Drumfin.

"How else?" asked Fraser wearily.

"You do not lack courage, sir."

"Ah," said the surgeon, smiling bitterly, "there is a still harder task."

The old man's eyes flickered in a sudden glance of comprehension; he saw much in that little glimpse.

"Is it so, my friend?" he said tenderly, and his long brown fingers closed on Fraser's perspiring hand. "The world seems strangely made."

Fraser dozed a little then, and for some hours they did not speak, but on the surgeon's waking in the late afternoon, Drumfin suggested that he himself should go forward to Aros.

"You shall not," said the surgeon. "The work is mine," and he sat up in bed.

"At least let me help," said the exile. "I can go on to Moy?"

But Fraser was obdurate, and forthwith dressed. He was feeling stronger, and after an evening meal they set off together for Aros.

They found that the chief had gone to Quinish yesterday and that it would be the morrow before he returned; so yielding at last to continued entreaties, the surgeon consented that Drumfin should bear half the burden, and break the news to Norman's father, whilst he himself, after an interval of rest, would go on to Moy that night.

It was thus that Fraser and the Ruapais set out once more on their journeyings, and mounted on rough garrons, and well-happed in plaids, they went rapidly off on the Glenforsa road, in a cold night of cloud-free stars with a quarter-moon just rising. But the promise of the early night was not fulfilled, and before daybreak, squalls and rain-bursts from the south met the travellers in the teeth; so, when they came to Glenmore, the Ruapais advised that by a deviation eastwards to the longer Loch Uisg road, they would make quicker progress, and they turned their horses' heads accordingly.

As they came in by Loch Spelve, the sun rose, and at intervals flooded the winter landscape with its shining. The creamy torrents drummed and dinned everywhere through black rock and rusty heather down to a sea of spindrift and white horses—a grey sea, slowly and infrequently traversed by long shafts of pale illumination from the midst of the heavy cloud-drift. Sodden and weary, the riders jogged on.

They reached Kinlochspelve, and here Fraser thought it best to leave the Ruapais and the garrons behind, for the soldiery might have returned, or the Sunivaig men have circled back to Moy, and he would be safer if he went forward circumspectly on foot and alone. He made a strange figure, his dark plaid of tartan, mud-splashed and shrunken, hanging awry over the sling which his shoulder-wound had again rendered necessary; a gust of the night had left him hatless; his hair was plastered lankly on his forehead and tied with a shapeless bag-ribbon behind, whilst a pallid and unshaven cheek added to the uncouthness of his plain features, down which mingled rain and perspiration streamed salt to his lip. Yet he pushed on stoutly, leaning against the blast and the sheets of rain. Anon the sun flared out, and he steamed in it for a space, until the next downpour with its accompanying squalls broke sudden on him.

It was as he came through the larches by Loch Uisg to where the pathway parallels the shore that a movement at a point a mile ahead caught his eye, and he left the road quickly, disposing himself, aquake with cold and damp though he was, among the wet and fading bracken. Here he waited until

the little group of travellers he had descried had passed. Moy himself, close wrapped in his plaid, his bonnet low on his brows, went by with his pony at a walking pace. Following him came some men on foot, whom Fraser recognised as the retinue of the chief—henchman, gilliemore, bladier, piper, and piper's gillie stalked down the track, their draggled plaids barely screening them from the sheets of rain.

"For Duart, I should say," said the watcher to himself, smiling at the pomp of the tiny procession. "A state visit, maybe."

He mused as his eyes followed the little company along the loch side: it seemed like the passing of the remnant of some brave old order of the world; and even while he smiled, he sighed, as lightfoot and silently, the chief and his little court disappeared through the slanting rain amid the pines.

Fraser took the road once more. And now the grounds of Castle Moy were reached, and the long avenue of oak and sycamore, running to where the burn came through the level, quiet and unbroken. There, where the stream swept to its turning seawards, was the well-remembered bridge of rough wood, and leaning on the balustrade of bark, was the cloaked figure of a woman, the sight of whom made the apple of his throat to swallow again and again.

"You?" she said in a low voice, and came to him swiftly. "Safe," she murmured, and pressed close to his side. "My heart!" she whispered, and kissed his wet cheek.

He looked away from her, and down at the eddies

in the brown water and the red leaves falling there from the wind-tossed branches overhead. On this canopy of dying foliage the rain-drops pattered thickly, and sombre and sad seemed all things in the enfolding woods ; no stirring of birds, no peering of flowers. Yet a bird sang in Morag's heart, and her eyes, lovelier than any flowers, looked up happily for the sunlight in the eyes of her lover. But when they turned on her there was no sunshine in them ; fixed and glassy they were as the eyes of the dead, and at the sight she shivered and clung to him in fear.

"What is it ?" she asked in a voice she hardly knew for her own. "What terrible thing is this ?"

He bent his head and was silent.

"My heart !" she said again, lifting the wet wisps of hair from his brow. "Wet and weary and broken you are ; what is there else ?"

He tried to find his voice, tried anew, and haltingly began his tale. Mostly he told it with his head bent to his arm on the beam of the bridge, so that she should not see his face. Mostly she heard it, bending over him, her hand straying over his sodden locks, while her grave eyes, set as in a trance, sought the forest depths surrounding. When he told of Norman's renewed treachery, she shuddered.

"Oh, be kind, dear heart !" she cried, "for the world slips from me, and here is bitterness and emptiness indeed. Oh, better a death for you from the Tíree men's knives than the old life, my brother !"

"It is death I have to speak of," said Fraser huskily.

"Death ?"

For a little he heard nothing but her deep breathing, and looking up, he saw her eyes still fixed on the far obscurities of the woods upstream.

"Courage," he said.

"It is Norman?" she asked.

He bowed his head.

Very calm and very pale, she repeated the words to herself in an undertone. "It is Norman," she said; and though Fraser strove to speak, he failed utterly at sight of that face so set and white.

"Go on," she said quietly.

His tongue clove to his palate, for her eyes were fire now, and her hand was raised from the folds of her cloak in a new gesture of wonder. Then of a sudden his voice came to him, but not for the work he asked of it.

"My God!" he cried. "You know—you have divined it!"

"It was you . . . who . . . killed him?" she said.

"I killed him," he answered.

At that she had almost fainted where she stood, but she struggled with her weakness, and moved off from him, her hands tightly clenched, her face averted. "Oh, brother—brother mine!" she whispered, even as if his shade might hear, and then fell silent for a space. And the man, sick unto death with the horror of it all, stood watching her, his every energy spent, the sweat of his agony breaking fast on him, now that his task was accomplished. But she turned slowly again, her grey eyes shining through her unshed tears, and came towards him.

"You . . . killed him?" she repeated.

" I killed him."

" In fair fight ? "

" In fair fight."

Her composure dumfounded him, so uncanny she seemed, standing there in the wet cold morning, the rust-coloured oak-leaves, the wind-showered rain-drops pattering around her—a figure alert and intense, a face pulsing with thoughts new-born and strange.

" And this is the tale you bring me ? " she said, grasping his hands among the folds of his wet plaid.

" And these are the hands that did yon ? "

Unanswering, he quaked with a sudden fear.

But she kissed his fingers with a rapid movement, and then as quickly his lips that were dry with terror.

" Heart of my heart ! " she said, her head on his shoulder. " You are my brother and my sister, my father and my mother," and at the word she swooned on the red leaves at his feet.



## CHAPTER XXXV

### DRUMFIN GOES FISHING

FRASER had barely left Aros when Doctor MacNab arrived, Drumfin having sent for him because of his companion's wound. And on his heels came Pennyfuaran, still seeking the lost Norman—from Glenbyre to Craig, from Craig to Glencannel, and so to Aros.

"Well met," said Drumfin. "Friends crossing the ford are best near each other. Come ben and I'll tell you where the ford is."

He took them to the laird's study, where he gave them refreshment and told them Fraser's story. They heard it with grave faces and in silence, until at the mention of the surgeon's journey to Moy, Pennyfuaran's handsome face—now of a starker cast, a manlier grace—twitched as in sudden pain, and he rose and left the room.

A little later he could be heard in his chamber, executing little melancholy airs and runs on his chanter, while, miserable as men condemned, the other two sat on.

"Man, it's little sleep for me this night, Gillian," said MacNab at last. "I think I'll read a bittie physic." He took some heavy volumes of the laird's and drew into the hearth.

The exile rose and peered from the window into the dark; a fine smirring rain was obscuring all things, and at times squalls came through it in a blatter, rattling the pane.

"I'll not sleep either, I fear," said he, taking up a volume of the author medical and fingering it. "Humph! The learned Cullen. Well, well! Every man to his trade." He put the book aside. "And mine seems to be that of outlaw, Doctor—skulking in caves or fleeing through heather—a long apprenticeship, man, and it seems never to end. Even so, I'll take a turn on the shore just to keep myself in practice." And going to the hall, he donned his cloak and slipped out.

He took the road between the shore and Glenaros woods, and though the mist and the dark were thick, he felt again the hills and the glens of home around him. In memories of the past dreamed over once more, he tried to forget the tragedy of the present hour. But for the exile the past, too, was sad. Did he think of the woods of Morvern, or of the Speinne's slopes enfolded in these same soft vapours of the night, they brought to mind many an older sorrow—chief among them the memory of his lost love, a woman with the face of Morag. Did he recall the lands northward still, it was but to muse of Alasdair, the Bard of War, now grown old and peace-abiding—how on a day of days in Glenfinnan long ago, the poet's song to his Prince had hummed in his ears at its first chanting, and all seemed fair and bright, with never a hint of Culloden at the end of the road they had that day entered on. Sad memories all, and yet he dwelt fondly on them, bringing by some strange alchemy, sweetness out of bitterness. But not by any labour of thought would any such transmutation come to this new sorrow that had fallen on the house of

Aros. "Blue are the hills that are far from us," he quoted, pondering the contrast. He strove to shut out the picture of his coming interview with Aros, but it would not be so easily banned; it returned again and again, and only vanished when a sudden necessity for action disturbed his mood of meditation.

For as he looked northwards in the dark, he saw far out, where the Sound should lie clear, save for mist, for many a mile, a point of faint radiance grow to life and die again—blurred and diffused in the fog, a ship's light surely. Then, as he watched, there came close at hand the hollow rumble of a boat's keel on the pebbles of the beech.

"Here's mischief again," said Drumfin, and with the instinct of an old campaigner, he drew his cloak close, and laid himself prone on the wet earth to listen.

But for a full ten minutes there came no further sign or sound, till a clear voice close at hand spoke in Gaelic.

"It's the reef she's feared for: it's that keeps her out. And no wonder with that same reef, and the night so wild."

There was no answer, and after a pause, the Jacobite creeping behind some stony spurs that ran seawards, moved in the direction of the speaker. Could this be the soldiery on the move once more? he asked himself, and the next instant he had almost sighed audibly in relief, for the voice spoke again, and set his fears at rest.

"And now, good-bye to Aros Isle, say I. What hills, man, what hills!"

The tongue was the Gaelic ; and in Gaelic the answer came : " Dry shoes catch no fish. The hills were worth the climbing after all, for the work is done at last. Show a light, man, show a light ! "

A lanthorn was quickly unmasked, and Drumfin made out a group of men with the waves tossing up to their feet, as they stood around their craft, ready to launch. One he saw was a stout, silent man, who wore a coat of many capes. The boat splashed heavily as they ran her out, leapt on board, and pushed off ; the lanthorn dipped with the swinging of the wherry, and against its halo only one dark figure now stood out solitary on the shore.

" Well, well," said this man, " a safe journey to you all. But see you now that you pay Rob, and not have him falling back on me."

Someone in the boat laughed derisively, the oars dipped in unison, and they were off—a yellow blur in the fog. He who was left, stood watching until the two points of diffused radiance approached, died into one, and gradually faded into the dark. Then he turned, chuckling, and crawled round the landward end of the rocky spit whence his late companions had embarked. He was making for the road by the shore, but forthwith he stumbled over the crouching form of Drumfin, who seized his wrists instantly.

The stranger gasped in terror, but struggling desperately, freed himself from the other's grip, and attempted flight. As he did so, he took something from his breast and tossed it seawards. Drumfin was instantly on his heels, and catching his arm again, swung into a wrestle which ended in a fall

with the exile uppermost, and the other so far stunned that the binding of his hands by means of a hanger's belt was a matter of ease. The Jacobite then left him for a little and groped among the seawrack until he found the packet the man had tossed away: it was one of letters, tied with a ribbon. He struck flint and steel when he returned to his captive, and holding the lit tinder near the fellow's face, he blew on it till it glowed sufficiently to light his features.

"I thought as much," said he; "I just thought as much. Voices don't change greatly even in ten years."

The man answered by a groan. "What—what?" he asked.

"It's only Drumfin," said the Jacobite. "'Two hundred pounds and a crown a day for life,' you remember, Callum? You have had a long hunt for me, but here I am at last. . . . Do you think you can stand?"

He propped the dazed tacksman on his feet. "Try walking now," he said.

MacQuarie hissed a little as in anger, but did not move.

"Walk, Callum. Here is my sword behind you."

The man moved up the beach, and reached the shore-road.

"Quicker, Callum," said Drumfin. "The spray is on my hanger, and it is not good for it to be long unsheathed. Tramp!"

The tacksman trudged on in the wet darkness, his head hanging, a silly noise of moans and hisses coming from his lips; indeed, he seemed almost

crazed with confusion. They came thus to Aros House, and the exile marched his prisoner straight to the laird's study where Doctor MacNab read his medicine aloud, intoning his author in tones liturgical. The physician stared in surprise at sight of the captive.

"Only a strange fish I picked up on Glenaros shore," said Drumfin smiling. "You ken him?" He brought forward a chair and pushed the tacksman into it. "Please you, MacNab, give the serving man a call, and ask him to send Pennyfuaran."

At the name of the chieftain, MacQuarie gave a loud hiss; his ferret eyes closed as if he suffered some inward agony, and he rose from his chair, walked round it in an odd movement, and sat down again.

While waiting the arrival of Pennyfuaran, the Jacobite opened the packet of papers he had picked up on the shore. There was a little torn map of Aros Isle with the print of Blaeu of Amsterdam upon it; the rest were letters addressed to Mr. Ian Fraser; and one had a spot of blood on it.

The chieftain came into the room like a storm-burst, the door slamming with a force that shook the dust from the long rows of books. His eyes shone with wrath; the patch of fair skin on his forehead was flushing and paling in rapid alternations, and he flourished his practice-chanter in a movement of threatening.

"You fox!" he cried: and his hands went out as if to rend the tacksman asunder.

MacQuarie gibbered in his face, hissed a little, and rising, broke out of reach. Then he came

forward once more, made a little dance-step round the chair, and sat down again, the oddest of figures.

"*Dhia !*" cried the chieftain, falling back, very pale of a sudden. "The man's daft."

Drumfin nodded reassuringly, and signed to him to take a seat. "No, not daft," he said, speaking slowly and distinctly. "And I'll tell you why, Pennyfuaran ;—Are you listening, Callum ?—for if he be mad, as sure as my name is what it is, and outlaw though I be, he shall go to Bedlam ; and God pity the poor souls there whether they be sane or daft ! But if he be wise, and tell me truthfully what I ask—Are you listening, Callum ?—I shall as far as it lies within my power, deal mercifully with him. I could say no more if I spoke till doomsday."

"Drumfin !" cried Pennyfuaran. "Is not this the man who sought to sell you ?"

"That same man," said the exile gravely.

At that the tacksman's mouth stopped twisting, and the ferret eyes gleamed keen and steady. "Well, well ! Wonderful !" said Callum. "Well, well ! You saw through my bit ploy, Drumfin ? And it's you are the man of your word, I'm sure."

"Fox, fox !" said Pennyfuaran underbreath.

"I shall keep my word, MacQuarie," answered the Jacobite. "But I warn you, I give it you here only as you speak truth to me. If you mislead, then—" He passed his long brown fingers through the air in a movement, as if all hope had gone from the world.

"There now—there now—it's naught but the truth you'll have. And if only I were free at the

wrists, Drumfin, I'd be as happy here as in Inshriff itself, knowing you for the gentleman you are, sir. Ay, ay, and it's you are the gentleman, Drumfin."

The exile smiled at the flattery, and loosened the belt on his captive's wrists. Instantly the unbound hands were twining round each other, and it was as if the movement stimulated their owner to new life.

"Anything you ask, Drumfin—anything you ask. It's the truth you'll have," he said briskly.

"I don't doubt you," said Drumfin, looking away from him into the red of the peats. "Let us begin. I want to know about these letters.—But first, tell me this: Was it Deaf Alan and his men you parted from on Glenaros shore to-night?"

"It was, Drumfin—it was that. It's you kens everything, sir."

"And it was Rob MacAllister's smack that met them, Callum?"

"Rob's it was, Drumfin. That's whose it was, sir."

"And they spoke of their work as finished, Callum. Now tell me what they meant by that?"

The exile had suddenly turned his gaze from the peats and fixed it on his captive's face; and instantly the ferret eyes shifted to a downward, and then to a sidelong glance.

"Well, well," began Callum.

"The truth!" cried Drumfin, his eyes blazing, and his hand slapping the letters on the table.

The fellow became sullen at once, and still seemed to meditate a lie.

"The truth!" said the Jacobite again; "or—"



The lean fingers again tossed in air in a gesture of despair inexpressible.

"It's the truth you'll have then," said MacQuarie. "But God knows I had no part in the affair. It was forced I was."

Drumfin turned angrily on him. "And that's a lie," he said.

The tacksman beat his hands together wildly. "It's the truth I swear," said he, his anger also palpable. "Who is to judge between us?"

"Man, where was the forcing when you came to Rhoail?" cried Drumfin, recalling the Ruapais' story.

"*Dhia!*" said the tacksman. "You ken that, too?"

"I ken that: but I want more."

"We speak of different matters," said MacQuarie. "You ken of Rhoail; but I speak of what came after. For Alan and his men came back from Craig to Inshriff when they found Cattanach gone—Cattanach was the name, I think?—" and he gave a sly little glance at Drumfin's unmoving features. "And it's from Inshriff the forcing was, I tell you."

"I see," said Drumfin. "I admit I was wrong."

"They would have it that I knew where he was," went on MacQuarie. "They had already tried Glenbyre and found it empty, but I knew nothing further of their man."

"And then?" said Drumfin, finding the story halt.

"And then they forced me to guide them over Maam Clachaig to Glenaros, unsure of their ground

as they were. Me, an old man, see you, and my hands bound, too ! Well, well ! ”

“ And then ? ” pursued the exile.

“ And then it was on the Maam we found them, sir.”

“ Them ? Who ? ”

“ Cattanach and Fraser, both,” said MacQuarie with a smile of deep satisfaction. “ But ’twas only one killing.”

“ Ay ? ” said Drumfin drily.

“ One killing,” went on the tacksman—“ one killing, for Fraser was stark in death when we got to him. I had no part nor lot in it, I say. My hands were bound, and that I’ll swear to.”

“ I see,” said the exile, leading him on. “ I see.”

“ The way of it was this,” went on the tacksman.

“ We were a full mile from the top, and the morning light was just beginning to show, when there came three or four shots on the hill above us. You could hear them echo long and long. And, old man as I was—bound as I was—mind you, the brutes pushed me on at the double. We came on those two—”

“ Where ? ” asked Drumfin, testing his man.

“ Right on the edge of the pass yonder, where the going is steepest—and they were wrestling keen. The dawn was but breaking, as I said, and we stole up to them and lay watching in the heather, not fifty yards off. It was no quarrel of ours, the fight was good, and they were too busy to notice us near. But when Cattanach killed his man, out we came.”

“ Only then ? I see,” said the exile, still plying him with a word to keep him garrulous.

"He tried the running, ay, did he, but Alan had him by the neck, and knew him for his proper game, and he sent his knife here." He tapped the left breast.

"Killed outright?" asked Drumfin.

"Outright, sir. Well, well, it's you has the very word, Drumfin. And—*Dhia*!—how pleased they were when they found that the other was Fraser! It's there was the toasting, I tell you."

"And these papers?" asked the exile, tapping the packet on the table.

"It's to them I'm coming, sir. For it was when they unbound me that I found them. And unbound I was, you may be sure, when the killing was 'over, for I must join them in their drinking. They were too busy at the horn to heed a burial or aught else, and when they hurried to leave the place, they overlooked these notes any sober man might have seen, so, thinking they might be of use, I just took them, sir."

"Of use?" said Drumfin smiling. "Worth money, you mean?"

"What else, sir, but the good money? And it's easy seen why I wanted riddance of them when you came on me, sir. It might have been someone else, and not so friendly." He turned to Pennyfuaran.

Drumfin glanced at the man with something of horror in his look, but the tacksman rattled on as glibly as if he but spoke of the price of black cattle at a Falkirk tryst.

"And then we came past Clachaig and as far as Loch-na-Keal. And still and on they wouldna let me go till I had seen MacAllister about his smack

and bargained for his taking them off. 'Twas in Glenaros woods we lay last night and to-day, until Rob came. And it's me will have the trouble with Rob, for they'll never pay him."

"And that's all your story?" asked Drumfin.

"All, sir. And it's there is the truth. And I have your own word, Drumfin?"

"Your word?" cried Pennyfuaran. "This is murder, Drumfin."

In alarm, MacQuarie made a movement of appeal to the Jacobite. "See you that now, sir—see you that now! I have your word, Drumfin, have I not? It was two dead, and yet it was but one killing on our side, and till it was over, Callum MacQuarie's hands were tied.

"I believe you, I believe you," said Drumfin. "And though the dead may not return through anything you've told us, Callum, yet your story has broken a spell that was cast by the dead. Man, you've done what you never meant to do all your days—some good to another human, for your tale takes the blood-stain from innocent hands."

"Do you tell me?" said the man, his mouth agape in surprise. "Will I be paid for it, think you?"

"Ugh! Toad!" said Pennyfuaran. "Let me tell you, Drumfin, it's not me that believes him, for I'll take him for nothing but art and part in it. It's red-handed he is, and it's the gallows is hungry waiting for him. Man, was it not yourself he sold to Fawkener? And he'll sell you again. Do you forget Moy and Kinloch?"

"I forget nothing," said the exile gravely, handing

the tacksman his bonnet and opening the door. "Yet he goes scatheless for me. Let him do his worst."

The ferret-eyed man retired, cringing, and rubbing his hands, and he smiled evilly over his shoulder at the chieftain who stood to watch him go. The door closed on him.

"Ugh!" cried Pennyfuaran in relief at his exit. "God send him his worst calamity!"

"Calamity?" said Drumfin, seating himself to gaze far into the fire's red heart. "But no. For what calamity can be worse than this man's: to be—Callum MacQuarie?"

## CHAPTER XXXVI

“ BEANNACHD LEIBH ! ”

SUMMER was come. Nine months had gone since Deaf Alan and his men had sailed from Aros, and passed for ever from out the ken of all who knew them there. But green Tiree never saw their voyage's end, nor any shore : the mist and the skerries had seen to that.

Summer was come. And from the churchyard beside the little ruined chapel on Pennygown rock there looked out on the blue Sound two little grassy knolls, where former summers had seen the turf smooth and unmounted. The headstones bore the MacLean quarterings, for Norman was buried here, and beside him Aros himself. It was but eight months since the chief had died : he had only survived the shock of his son's death by a week or two. Drumfin and Morag had spared him the truth, and he never knew his boy but as worthy of him.

Summer. . . . And still Drumfin haunted in safety his native isle, dreaming the old sweet sorrows over again, listening enchanted to the mavis, the robin, the fluting blackbird busy in Glenaros woods ; hearkening on Glenaros shore the curlew's wail, so piercing, so intimate.

August was here, and a fair day for hay-making in Aros crofts ; a mild sun and soft winds, the fragrance of the coils everywhere intrusive. But on this day propitious for seasonable toil, the fields

were untenanted of workers, and the children, the brown-skinned rogues, had deserted the thickets of rasps on the hillside above Callachly for the pools on Ardmore beach. On a little hillock behind them sat a group of crofter women—the mothers mainly observant of the bairns' slipping feet and eager hands, the older people scanning under shaded brows the waters of the Sound.

Between Aros and Fiunary the waves were dotted with half a dozen brown sails, each little craft active beyond its capacity with passengers—the men-folk of the watchers on the shore. In the stern of one rude cutter reaching easily to and fro, Doctor MacNab was seated; while forwards at the mast-foot stood Drumfin. All were eagerly intent, watching a brig that tacked from Innimore to Fishnish and back again.

"With both wind and tide against her," said the Doctor, "she'll take time. It's two full hours since she left Duart, yet here is a sorrowful man, Drumfin—here is a sorrowful man, sir. What manner of a creature shall I be when she's gone, Gillian? . . . . And here is Aros Sound; but it's like a dream to me, and not the place it was at all, at all. . . . The bonnie Sound! the bonnie hills! Where in all the Carolinas will she find the like? . . . . Ah, well! her heart's desire to her heart, dear lass!"

Dubious and tearful, he shook his head, and after a silence resumed his plaint.

"A woeful country," he said, "yon America, with its Massachusetts' conventions and what not. Whatever takes them there? I say. A place and

a time unsettled beyond comparison with this our native land, God bless it ! ”

“ Ay, ay, Neil,” said Drumfin, looking down the mainsail at him, and smiling grimly—“ Ay, ay—here we are wonderfully settled, are we not ? Never a rebellion nor a clan feud ? We’re vastly civilised under Hanover, eh ? . . . Give me, I say, the Indians of the Carolinas, and I’ll match them with Deaf Alan and his men. Did you never hear of a night I spent in Kinloch Inn, Doctor ? ”

“ Ah, Gillian, Gillian ! ” replied MacNab, shaking his head. “ There’s that night ; and there are others I know of, when you slept safe as a babe in a cot. Do you forget that but two among a thousand in the isle have tried to sell the head of an exile they ken ? And the price no small one.”

“ You do not take me,” said Drumfin shortly, and flushing as he spoke. “ It’s not of my own race I’d speak ill. It’s of misguided ruling of it, I’m thinking. . . . But here’s the *Bon Voyage* coming fair for us, and at the next tack it’s the good-byes we’ll be giving the young folk.”

Surging to the forefoot amid showering sprays that took rainbow colours from the sinking sun, the great black hull and its towers of white sails came on.

“ On the poop, on the poop ! ” cried MacNab, rising. “ There, there ! ”

The brig went about grandly, a wonderful structure of wood and canvas, magnificent in full sunshine ; her blocks creaked ; a sailor yo-ho-ed ; the rest was silent, gentle might. Splashing in her wake, came the little fleet of fishing craft, and there



arose a babble of voices from their populous timbers, as the fishers and crofters caught sight of the dear ones on the sloping poop-deck near the wheel. Both were swathed in sea-cloaks that flapped in the breeze, but there was no mistaking them.

"He's queer without yon arm-sling of his," said MacNab. "But see! her handkerchief is a flutter yonder. . . . And there! he waves his hat. . . . My bonnie lass, my brave lass!"

They sailed closer yet, and still they waved their parting. The fishers sang *iorraman* while they put out the sweeps to keep their smacks closer to the brig, as she tacked across to Morvern again; and always the cloaked figures standing close together yonder signalled farewell. At times Morag's eyes could be seen a-glisten, despite their happiness; at times the twitching of the lips of the tall man beside her was plainly to be made out.

"A blessing on them!" said Callum Beag, pulling on a jib-sheet, and looking back to the dots of children playing on the rocks of Ardmore. He was thinking of a little brown-eyed boy with ruddy hair whom he had left behind. "It's the fool I am not to have taken the little one with me, for he'll never see them yonder. How beautiful the ships he carved for him! A blessing, a blessing on you!" he cried.

And so on they sailed far into the evening, a slow progress against water and wind. Then, as the light failed, and purple clouds formed low in a saffron sky over Ben Shiante's shoulder, the cutters turned homewards one by one.

"*Beannachd leibh!*" cried a multitude of voices. "Blessing on you! *Beannachd leibh!* Good-bye!"

Thus they parted by stages until only one little craft toiled manfully in the great vessel's wake. The tide was now on the slack, and the *Bon Voyage* slipped on at a rapid rate, the cutter losing every moment. Fainter the glow in the sky, darker the low cloud-bars, colder the sough of the wind in the cordage: the night was come.

The forms of Fraser and his wife were no longer visible in the soft gloom, and the little boat's course was turned for the hills of home. Yet still those whom she bore, looked back at the brig's sails stencilled in black on the primrose sky, and spoke their good-byes underbreath. Drumfin stood yet by the mast, a sombre figure, and gazed long at the distant vessel.

“*Beannachd leibh!*” he murmured—“*Beannachd leibh!* O hearts of gold! Would to God my Prince had known you!”





## Glossary of Gaelic Words

<i>Aghmhor</i> . . .	happy
<i>Albainn</i> . . .	Scotland
<i>Amadan</i> . . .	fool
<i>Beannachd leat</i> } .	Blessing on you
<i>Beannachd leibh</i> }	
<i>Beag</i> . . .	little
<i>Bodach</i> . . .	old man
<i>Cailleachean</i> . . .	old women
<i>Canntaireachd</i> . . .	chaunt
<i>Ceilidh</i> . . .	story-telling
<i>Clachan</i> . . .	a group of cottages
<i>Clarsach</i> . . .	Highland harp
<i>Cnoc-na-croiche</i> . . .	Gallows-Hill
<i>Co tha sin?</i> . . .	Who is there?
<i>Cromag</i> . . .	shepherd's crook
<i>Cuach</i> . . .	cup
<i>Cuarain</i> . . .	foot-covering of the raw hide
<i>Dhia!</i> . . .	God!
<i>Direach sin!</i> . . .	Just so!
<i>Duin'-uasal</i> . . .	gentleman
<i>Eilean</i> . . .	isle
<i>Eilean Dhia</i> . . .	isle of God
<i>Garron</i> . . .	Highland pony
<i>Gillie</i> . . .	a lad, a Highland commoner
<i>Iorraman</i> . . .	boat-songs
<i>Maam</i> . . .	a round, steep hill
<i>Mo chridhe!</i> . . .	My dear!
<i>Mo thruaigh!</i> . . .	My sorrow!
<i>Mogain</i> . . .	footless stockings
<i>Och, ochan!</i> . . .	Alas, alas!
<i>Oidche mhath!</i> . . .	Good night!

<i>Ruapais</i>	.	.	The Careless One, the Rigmarole
<i>Seanachaidhean</i>	.	.	story-tellers, bards
<i>Sgian dubh</i>	.	.	black knife
<i>Slan leat !</i>	.	.	Farewell !
<i>Tearlach</i>	.	.	Charles
<i>Tearlach Og</i>	.	.	Prince Charlie
<i>Tir-nan-Oig</i>	.	.	Land of the Ever-Young
<i>Tonnag</i>	.	.	a small shawl

## Glossary of Scots Words

<i>Airt</i>	.	.	.	direction
<i>Bannock</i>	.	.	.	scone
<i>Bawbee</i>	.	.	.	halfpenny
<i>Body</i>	.	.	.	person
<i>Bouman</i>	.	.	.	cowman, or crofter
<i>Breaking</i>	.	.	.	bankruptcy
<i>Brock</i>	.	.	.	beast
<i>Causey</i>	.	.	.	causeway
<i>Cogie</i>	.	.	.	wooden bowl
<i>Craig</i>	.	.	.	throat
<i>Cruisie</i>	.	.	.	metal lamp
<i>Deave</i>	.	.	.	deafen
<i>Doer</i>	.	.	.	agent
<i>Ettled</i>	.	.	.	intended
<i>Fleeching</i>	.	.	.	scolding
<i>Girning</i>	.	.	.	complaining peevishly
<i>Gowff</i>	.	.	.	gust
<i>Greetin'</i>	.	.	.	bewailing
<i>Haud</i>	.	.	.	hold
<i>Haud till't !</i>	.	.	.	Hold on !
<i>Howe and corrie</i>	.	.	.	hollow and height
<i>Jalouse</i>	.	.	.	surmise
<i>Jo</i>	.	.	.	lover
<i>Lave</i>	.	.	.	remainder
<i>Loon</i>	.	.	.	fellow
<i>Maun</i>	.	.	.	must
<i>Mirk</i>	.	.	.	dark
<i>Oxter</i>	.	.	.	armpit
<i>Scunner</i>	.	.	.	disgust
<i>Scrape, the</i>	.	.	.	the 'Forty-five Rising

<i>Shaw</i>	.	.	.	thicket, plantation
<i>Skirling</i>	.	.	.	shrieking
<i>Smeddum</i>	.	.	.	spirit
<i>Snood</i>	.	.	.	a ribbon for the hair
<i>Soumings</i>	.	.	.	allotments
<i>Spate</i>	.	.	.	flood
<i>Spier</i>	.	.	.	enquire
<i>Spring</i>	.	.	.	lively tune
<i>Stravaging</i>	.	.	.	wandering
<i>Tacks of land</i>	.	.	.	portions of land
<i>Tacksman</i>	.	.	.	{ a lessee of land who sublets to crofters
<i>Thrapple</i>	.	.	.	windpipe
<i>Tinchel</i>	.	.	.	hunt
<i>Tocher</i>	.	.	.	marriage portion
<i>Trusty</i>	.	.	.	secret agent
<i>Tyke</i>	.	.	.	dog
<i>Wadset</i>	.	.	.	a pawning of land
<i>Warlock</i>	.	.	.	wizard











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